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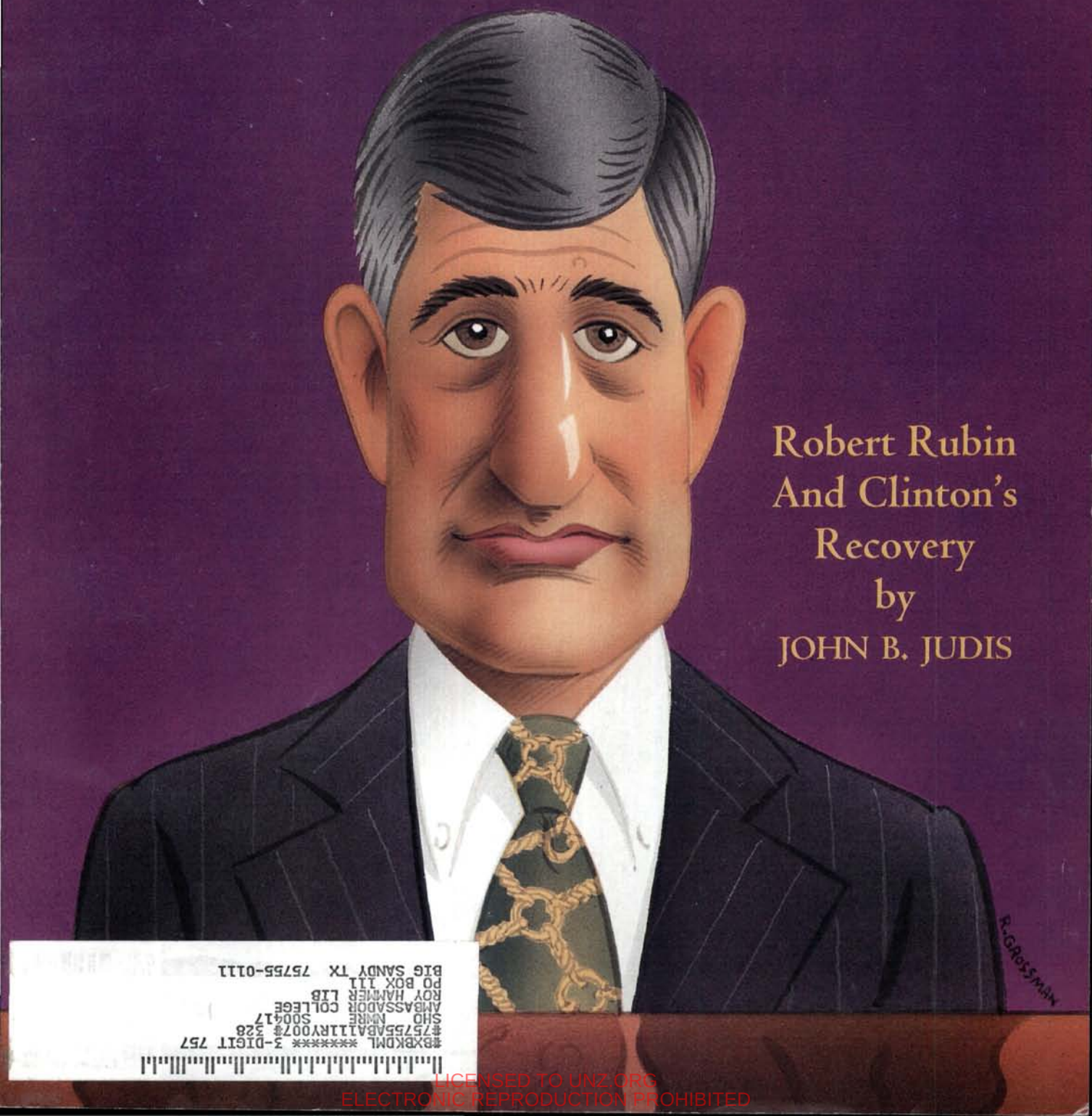

Robert Rubin
And Clinton's
Recovery
by
JOHN B. JUDIS

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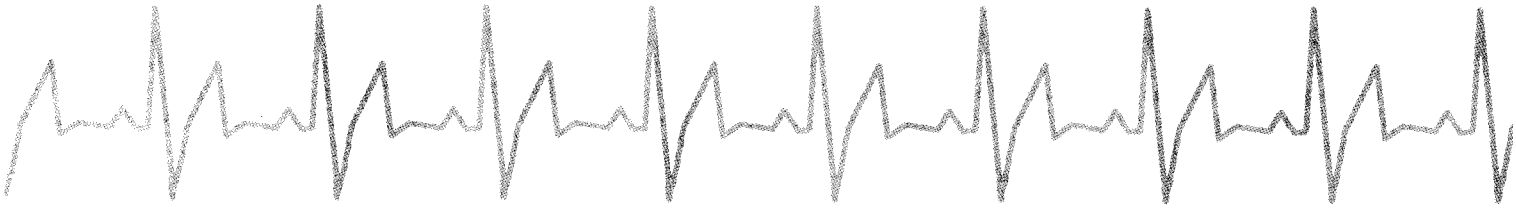

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FROM WASHINGTON

Stealth reform

Critics who complain that President Clinton's health care plan has "too much government" are onto something, but they don't have it exactly right. The problem isn't too much government; it's too much politics. The Clinton plan will force society to make explicitly, through the political system, decisions on painful questions such as limiting choice and rationing care that will have to be made—indeed, are being made—in any event.

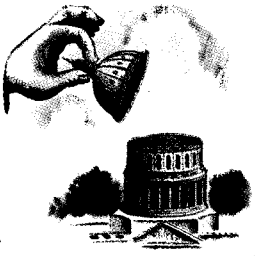
Alternative plans will make these same decisions covertly, and possibly less sensibly. It's not a matter of the efficiency of government versus private enterprise, or even of the moral superiority of individual freedom over collective decision-making. It's simply a matter of stealth. Nevertheless, asking politics to do more than it can is a real defect in Clinton's scheme. The fact that rival schemes obscure these unpleasant decisions may be a real virtue.

Complaints that Clinton's plan would "socialize" one-seventh of the American economy are ridiculous. Clinton would use a clever combination of government mandates and enhanced market forces to restrain costs and guarantee access to health care. Rival plans also posit a massive new government role in health care. In terms of "big government," the differences among the various alternatives (except for the Canadian-style "single-payer" option, which has few backers) are minor compared with the difference between where we are now and where all the plans would take us.

Consider the so-called "Consumer Choice Health Security Act," introduced November 18 by several conservative Republican senators and backed by The Heritage Foundation. (I have had occasion to praise an earlier version of this plan.) It now represents the right flank of opposition to Clinton.

By essentially forbidding insurance companies to discriminate against bad risks, the "Consumer Choice" plan would effectively socialize health care costs by government fiat, although not through the tax system. This plan even requires insurance premiums to be deducted from payroll checks—just like a tax, but don't call it one. The plan also requires every citizen to purchase a minimum amount of health insurance. Don't call that a tax either. Employers aren't required to supply insurance, as in Clinton's plan, but they are required to offer employees cash instead of any insurance they choose to offer. All these new mandates will require complicated regulations to interpret them and bureaucracies to enforce them.

Speaking of taxes, the "Consumer Choice" plan proposes replacing the employer deduction for health care premiums with a tax credit to individuals for their own medical expenses. The credit is larger for poorer people and becomes "refundable" to those who don't earn enough to pay taxes. This change would amount to a tax increase for affluent people with generous employer-paid plans, and even so the plan comes up about $45 billion a year short. (Don't call it "new spending.") The sponsors propose to squeeze this money out of Medicare and Medicaid—just like Clinton.



However, the "Consumer Choice" plan seems to avoid some of the tough choices in the Clinton plan. It doesn't actually avoid them, but it seems to—which, in a way, is more important. For example, Clinton's plan puts almost everyone into a health care "alliance" that negotiates with insurers on behalf of all its members. The geographic boundaries of the alliances have already become a nasty political decision; if you're in an alliance that includes New York City, with higher costs and sicker people, your insurance rates will be higher than if you're in an alliance that just includes the suburbs.

But defining the risk pool is inevitable in any scheme that pools the risks, which all of them do. The "Consumer Choice" plan does not allow healthy consumers the "choice" of going uninsured, or of insuring with a company that doesn't have to take sick people at the same price. It does allow insurers to discriminate on the basis of "geography," which means that someone will have to decide what constitutes a permissible geographical unit. Without the big hoo-hah about "alliances," though, this decision could grease through the system without much trouble.

Clinton's "alliances" will also get blamed when, inevitably, more and more people find themselves in HMOs and other arrangements that limit their choice of doctors. The Clinton plan promises that each alliance will be required to continue offering a traditional "fee-for-service" option, but the relative price of that option could make it impractical for most people. The same will happen, of course, with no reform. And certainly the same will happen under the "Consumer Choice" plan—the whole idea of which is to save money by making consumers more sensitive to what their health care is costing. But the government won't get the blame, which is a big plus.

The most agonizing issue of all in health care is "rationing"—defined as denying people treatment that has some value, but not enough (as decided by someone) to justify the cost. Clinton's plan is the only one that sets a total ("global") national health care budget. Critics say this will inevitably lead to rationing, as costs exceed the budget and people are denied various services in order to meet the target.

Health care takes 14 percent of American GDP, compared with 8 percent or 9 percent in other advanced countries. Clinton is prepared to see the figure go to 17 percent. Under those circumstances, given the waste in our system, it's not clear to me that denying people useful care will necessarily be required. What is clear is that expecting Americans to deal explicitly with that question is expecting too much.

The alternative plans are no less likely to lead to health care rationing than Clinton's plan—if they are going to be successful in holding down costs—but their rationing is likely to be harder to spot and much harder to blame on anyone in particular (like the rationing that already goes on in our health care system). Under the "Consumer Choice" plan, it will happen in the interstices of the system. Consumers, who are encouraged to be uninsured for the first several thousand dollars of annual health expenses, will avoid treatment to save money. Insurance policies for major illnesses will exclude this or that therapy.

The problem with the Clinton health care plan, in short, is not that it nationalizes too much but that it rationalizes too much. With its national boards and regional alliances, it makes clear what is better left murky. Democracy, or at least American democracy, can only do so much.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Star struck

To the editors:

While Ruth Shalit is entitled to be wrong in her opinions about me, she has no right to be wrong about the facts ("A Star is Born" November 15). This article was filled with factual errors and misrepresentations. For instance:

(1) The fact is, the State of Illinois absolved my mother of any wrongdoing in connection with her obligation to pay for her nursing home stay from an inheritance. With money provided by her family, all reimbursements were made and issues concerning Medicaid resolved.

(2) The fact is, no person, campaign staffer or volunteer, has ever complained to me or charged Kgosie Matthews with sexual harassment. Nor was such a charge made to any member of the campaign management—most of whom were women. That fact is uncontroverted. You have continued a charge made to the media by someone who never had the courtesy, the courage or the honesty to bring her grievance to her employer.

(3) The fact is, all financial reporting required by law—and it is extensive—has been made on a comprehensive and, with one exception, timely basis. The campaign has filed numerous reports, showing the source and use of all contributions. These are public records.

(4) The fact is, five of the quoted sources are people who were fired from the campaign. They did not just leave.

CAROL MOSELEY-BRAUN
United States Senator
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Ruth Shalit's article attacking my colleague, Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, totally ignored one important fact: she has become an effective and respected member of the United States Senate.

PAUL SIMON
United States Senator
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Ruth Shalit's frequent reliance upon mean-spirited, inaccurate statements impugning my professional competence went too far. At best, the article reflected a carelessness and a lack of diligence in ascertaining the facts.

First, Shalit cavalierly uses a quotation from Frank Mankiewicz of Hill and Knowlton that I was supposedly fired for incompetence. The truth is that I resigned to pursue other opportunities.

Second, Shalit quotes from the Reverend Jesse Jackson's *former* press secretary that I was Jackson's valet. As your readers now see from Jackson's letter to you, my position was far from a valet. My résumé accurately reflected that I was a longstanding and trusted adviser to Jackson.

Third, David Eichenbaum was quoted to impugn my abilities and integrity by saying that Senator Moseley-Braun's campaign was forced to "borrow hundreds of thousands of dollars" for T.V. time despite the fact that the campaign had raised almost $7 million. Had Shalit bothered to check public records available from the Federal Election Commission, she would have ascertained that the campaign borrowed *no* money at all.

KGOSIE MATTHEWS
Vice Chairman
Washington Strategic Consulting Group, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

In the course of preparation for the article on Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, I was asked, in a conversation I believed not to be for publication, whether I knew the circumstances of Kgosie Matthews's departure from Hill and Knowlton. I said I did not know, but I had heard from others at Hill and Knowlton that he had been asked to leave for reasons of incompetence. It now develops that I was wrong, and that Matthews in fact resigned. I regret the error.

FRANK MANKIEWICZ
Vice Chairman, Hill and Knowlton
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

In Ruth Shalit's profile of Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, an unsigned, typewritten letter, highly ambiguous in itself, is presented as solid evidence. The word "launder" appeared in quotation marks, showing that the writer wanted to distance himself or herself from the concept.

In Shalit's bizarre world, the campaign was not substantive enough because television advertising formed a low percentage of the expenses. Travel expenditures for the Moseley-Braun campaign were lower than those for Lynn Martin's senate campaign from two years before, but no one accused Martin of regal tastes.

The discussion of Senator Moseley-Braun's service as recorder of deeds recycles the worst of opponent Rich Williamson's campaign distortions. As recorder, Moseley-Braun took the lead in ending non-interest-bearing accounts, eliminated an antiquated and cumbersome system of title registration and freed unused indemnity funds for the use of the county as a whole. The "full-time" state legislator Shalit snidely refers to as a political ally was an experienced administrator who brought years of government experience to her job.

Shalit demeaned Moseley-Braun's victory by belittling her opponent. Williamson was an ambitious activist who had served in the White House, been an ambassador and an assistant secretary of state, and had years of political experience on both a state and national level. He was willing to abandon his conservative principles by running as a pro-choice moderate, to distort his opponent's record by complaining of tax votes where she had been part of a near-unanimous legislature answering the appeal of a Republican governor and to play the racism card by unfairly linking his opponent to Representative Gus Savage. These are the kinds of tactics that have certainly worked elsewhere. Moseley-Braun was able to prevail by taking a strong-principled stance on issues like health care reform, crime and a woman's right to choose.

JAMES HAWKING
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:

What an educational story Ruth Shalit recently provided for THE NEW REPUBLIC's readers about Senator Carol Moseley-Braun. For instance, I never realized what a strong philosophical commitment to the principle of confidentiality Moseley-Braun espoused until I read her statement in defense of her refusal to release the internal report on charges of sexual harassment against her campaign treasurer. "The people who were interviewed were interviewed in confidence. I see no choice but to honor their desire that their comments be confidential." I am pleased to hear this, but point out that should a fit of intellectual integrity overtake Moseley-Braun, she must rethink her position on the Thomas hearings (the occurrence of which she never questioned, and the political crest of which she was all too willing to ride to electoral victory) in light of that principle. For if the mystery leakers on the Senate Judiciary Committee had embraced the same commitment to the confidentiality and privacy of those who wish to remain anonymous—dare I say, even in the case of unsubstantiated allegations?—then both logic and consistency dictate that the same principles be respected in contexts in which the careers at stake do not include hers.

HELGI C. WALKER
Charlottesville, Virginia

Ruth Shalit responds:

The fact that Senator Moseley-Braun's mother no longer owes money to the state is irrelevant to the question of whether Moseley-Braun committed fraud. The seemingly incriminating documents discussed in my article had not been made available to the Illinois attor-

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ney general's office when it conducted its investigation. On Moseley-Braun's second point: campaign press secretary David Eichenbaum, finance director Steven Cobble and political director Peter McLennan were among those staffers quoted by name in my article as saying they complained personally to Moseley-Braun about Matthews's behavior. On her third point: I questioned not the timeliness of Moseley-Braun's campaign disclosure forms, but rather expenses left unaccounted for. Finally, I have no idea to whom Moseley-Braun is referring when she speaks of fired staffers. Eichenbaum and Cobble were with the campaign until the end. Gerald Austin, although he didn't do the campaign's last media buy, stayed with the campaign until the end as well. McLennan and spokesman Alton Miller left voluntarily in March; Kay Clement and Adam Clement in June and July, respectively.

Frank Mankiewicz's comment was on the record.

By election time, Moseley-Braun's campaign was $544,000 in debt, according to FEC documents. Where *did* the money for the final T.V. ads come from, if not borrowed? As for Matthews's status on the Jackson campaign, we'll have to take his word for it. Jesse Jackson's letter never arrived.

Fighting words

To the editors:

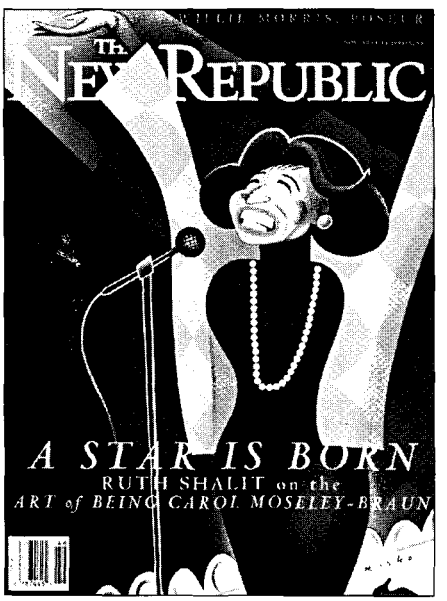
Contrary to Michael Kinsley's assertion ("War and Powers" TRB, November 8), I was not being inconsistent when I proposed amendments to require congressional approval in certain circumstances before President Clinton sent American military forces to Haiti or Bosnia. In fact, I was being perfectly consistent with the record I have compiled over thirty-three years in Congress.

I have consistently supported a congressional role in decisions of war and peace—no matter which party was in the White House. I voted for the War Powers Act in 1973, and voted to override President Nixon's veto. I have consistently opposed congressional efforts to pull the rug out once American forces have been deployed—leading a filibuster against the "Cooper-Church" Amendment cutting funds for operations in Laos and Cambodia in 1970, and joining with President Clinton to oppose immediate withdrawal from Somalia twenty-three years later.

Kinsley also glossed over the historical record of my position on President Bush's decision to commit American forces to liberate Kuwait. What I said—first on November 13, 1990, and repeatedly thereafter—was that President Bush should call Congress back into special session to consider the use of force in the Persian Gulf. I do not see a call for congressional authorization, consistent with Articles I and II of the Constitution, as simply a clever means to oppose a given deployment of U.S. forces. Quite the contrary: because the majority in Congress voted—in January 1991—to authorize U.S. force to liberate Kuwait, President Bush's hand as commander in chief was greatly strengthened.

While I agree with much of Kinsley's analysis when he urges President Clinton to support my amendments, his representation of my positions needed some correction.

BOB DOLE
United States Senator
Washington, D.C.



Final Jeopardy

To the editors:

Your November 15 editorial "In Jeopardy" in theory is correct in urging that the federal civil rights statutes not be used to retry defendants acquitted in such racially charged cases as the Rodney King case, the Yankel Rosenbaum case and the Reginald Denny case.

Your point would have been much better taken, however, had you published the editorial before the public pressured the federal government to apply the civil rights statutes to the Rodney King defendants. At this juncture, after the Rodney King defendants have been convicted of the federal charge, and while the killer(s) of Yankel Rosenbaum walk free, there are significant countervailing considerations of fairness and even-handedness and, more importantly perhaps, perceptions of fairness and even-handedness. To be sure, two wrongs do not make a right. But just consider if the situations had been reversed: i.e., Lemrick Nelson is acquitted in state court of killing Rosenbaum; he is then convicted on a federal civil rights charge for the same act; then the Rodney King defendants are acquitted by a California state jury; and then the issue of whether to prosecute them under the federal civil rights statute comes up for consideration. Would you have written the same editorial? And, if so, would a fraction of those who now agree with your editorial have agreed with it?

I suggest that the even-handed result would be for the Justice Department to proceed against Lemrick Nelson if, as a matter of trial strategy (as opposed to policy judgment), the evidence warrants a civil rights prosecution.

Your basic policy point, with which I agree, should be embodied prospectively, in Justice Department guidelines (just as the Justice Department has publicly available, nonbinding guidelines for RICO prosecutions, antitrust cases and so forth). Indeed, promulgation of guidelines may well help the department in the future resist the kinds of pressures from Congress and the public that you correctly decry. And in certain respects, those guidelines should permit prosecution under the civil rights laws, in cases when you would not permit them. If (as may well have been true in the state court trials of the King defendants and Lemrick) the state jury pool system tends to promote the likelihood of a jury that is racially unipolar, while a broader federal jury pool is likely to yield a more racially diverse jury, that ought to be a factor under the guidelines arguing for invocation of federal authority.

MAX GITTER
New York, New York

Higher power

To the editors:

Michael Lewis's November 8 column (Washington Diarist, "Godlessness") is a reminder that the usual trichotomy of believer/agnostic/atheist is seriously incomplete. How are we to classify someone like myself who (*a*) feels there must have been some transcendent act of creation, because there is no apparent reason why there had to be a universe in the first place, yet (*b*) rejects all more detailed assertions as lacking in empirical foundation?

We badly need a term that means something like "theological minimalist," but which does not grate on the ears as that phrase does on mine.

JOHN W. BUSH
Brooklyn, New York

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SOMETIMES WE'RE BASHFUL...

"...and consider the following list of requirements for comprehensive health care reform:

- ✔ *No exclusion for pre-existing condition*
- ✔ *Coverage must be portable from job to job*
- ✔ *No cancellation due to illness*
- ✔ *Choice of doctor and hospital*
- ✔ *Standard, comprehensive benefits package*
- ✔ *Certify health plans on ability to control costs*
- ✔ *Real quality standards for providers*
- ✔ *Purchasing pools for small business*
- ✔ *Stiffer penalties for health care fraud*
- ✔ *Immunization for America's children*
- ✔ *Reduction in unnecessary paperwork*
- ✔ *Expanded primary and preventive care*
- ✔ *Medical malpractice reform*
- ✔ *Coverage for all low-income Americans.*

Ted Kennedy? Jay Rockefeller? Hillary Clinton? Harry Truman? Could be.

But that comes from

AETNA...CIGNA... METLIFE...THE PRUDENTIAL and THE TRAVELERS!"

U.S. Senator Harris Wofford
June 17, 1993
National Press Club

SO WE'LL LET SOMEONE ELSE EXPLAIN WHAT WE'RE ABOUT.

Thank you, Senator – for understanding what we stand for. We may differ on important details, but we agree on this – the time for reform is now. And let's make it bipartisan. Health care reform has many friends. Let's bring them together for the sake of the American people.

THE ALLIANCE FOR MANAGED COMPETITION
Providing Health Coverage for 60 Million Americans
AETNA CIGNA METLIFE THE PRUDENTIAL THE TRAVELERS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 13, 1993

FECKLESS IN SEATTLE

Bravo, and bravo again, to President Clinton for NAFTA; but trade policy is not foreign policy. Like foreign policy, trade policy extends beyond our borders, but it is a simpler matter, in that it may be motivated almost completely by economic considerations. Not so foreign policy. Its helping hand to domestic and foreign business must always wait on considerations of national security and public philosophy. Interests and principles must be more primary than profits—which brings us to the Pacific Rim Summit in Seattle, and Bill Clinton's feckless encounter with Jiang Zemin.

The triumph of NAFTA has rightly filled Clinton with a kind of global economic élan; and having extended his élan northward and southward, he traveled to Seattle to extend it westward, and to explore fairer and more prosperous ways of integrating the not-so-miraculous American economy into the Asian economic miracle. That miracle, we are increasingly told, is coming to include China, where the economy has been growing, with our help, at an impressive rate. But in the case of China Clinton collided, or he should have collided, with the other remarkable fact about that country, which is that it is the largest country in the world not to have accepted the philosophical and political defeat of the collectivist, thought-controlling, socialist-inspired, authoritarian state.

In its systematic violation of human rights, the regime in Beijing is the most distinguished in its field. Indeed, its rather brazen argument seems to be that the defeat of its kind of state was economic, but not political; that it can liberalize its economy, but not its society; and that the sop of Western profits in China will pre-empt the application of Western ideals to China. During the Bush years, the counterargument was made by the president and his representatives that the opposite was really the case, that a liberalizing economy is the sufficient condition of a liberalizing society; and so George Bush proceeded to trade with China, insisting that trade was a political instrument that would eventually break the chains of the Chinese. During the campaign of 1992, however, Bill Clinton eloquently attacked George Bush for precisely that policy. "We should not reward China with improved trade status when it has continued to trade goods made by prison labor and has failed to make sufficient progress since the Tienamen Square massacre," the candidate from Little Rock said.

He was right. But the candidate from Little Rock is now the president from Washington, and his evasion of the moral question in Seattle was startling. Clinton sat with Jiang and failed to make any vigorous expression of the American commitment to human rights. After Seattle, the Chinese leadership may be forgiven for thinking that, at least for the interests of China, it is business as usual. And it was not just the moral question that Clinton evaded. There is also the matter of the global proliferation of advanced weaponry, about which the United States should have a few unpleasant things to say to China.

Instead Clinton lamely expostulated that "I don't think that you ever lose anything by talking to someone, as long as you're honest." But honest is not the same thing as forceful. Clinton's moist, Dan Fogelberg-like language betrays a poor grasp of diplomacy and a naive grasp of dictatorship. The satraps of the PRC are not worried that Clinton will lie to them. They are worried that he will punish them. And they are worried no more.

We are worried, however, that Clinton's inclination in foreign policy is neither isolationist nor interventionist, but economicist. For this reason, it is important to remember that the relations between economic openness and political openness, and between economic power and diplomatic power, are complicated. Economic liberalization may proceed for many, many years without political liberalization. (The Chinese tyrants are right. They *can* get away with a lot, if we let them.) And the world's largest debtor nation may also be the world's only superpower.

In the long run, certainly, the reform of the American economy, which includes an insistence on free trade, is required for the maintenance of the American position among the nations; but there is the short run, too, and the short run can be rather long and rather nasty, and in the short run it is up to the United States, debtor or not, postindustrial or not, solvent or not, to protect its interests and to support its values. The Clinton administration grandly calls its aim in foreign policy an "enlargement" of democracy around the world. But there was nothing enlarging for China in Seattle. There was only a shrinking for America. •

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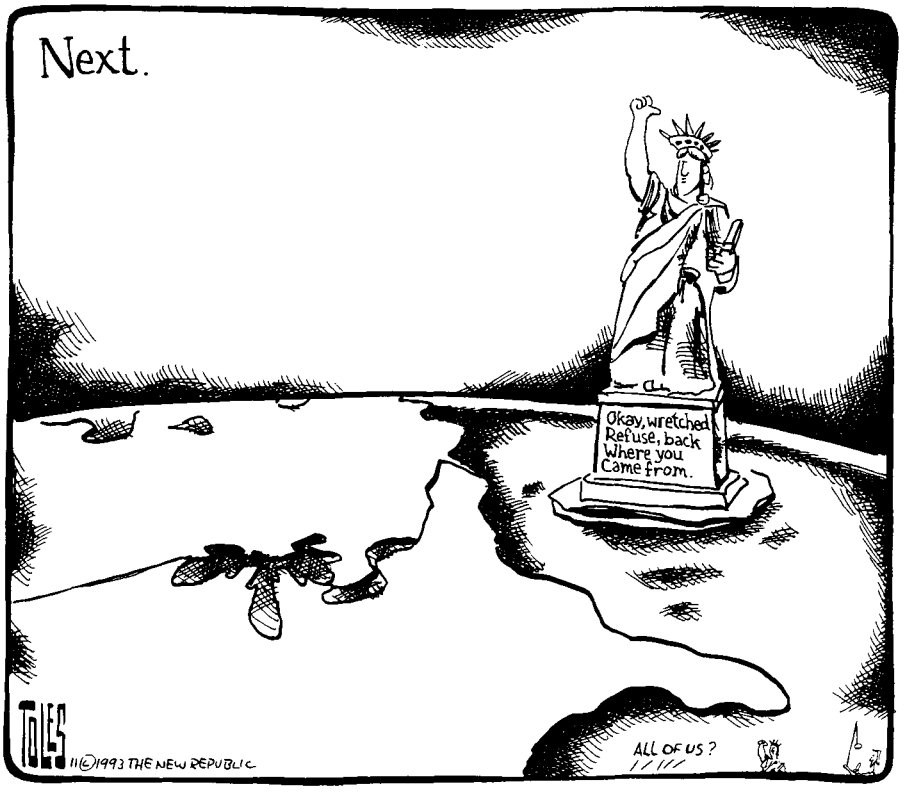
NOTEBOOK

KENNETH BURKE, R.I.P.: Last week saw the end of the longest-running American man of letters. Kenneth Burke died at 96, after almost a century of indefatigable and uniquely independent literary labors. "I have been on the fringes of many movements, at the center of none," he once said, and his protean, ambitious work challenges neat summary. His lifelong project to compile a "grammar" of "symbolic action" has proved as influential as it was idiosyncratic. Brought to THE NEW REPUBLIC by his friend Malcolm Cowley, he remained among this magazine's most frequent and inventive contributors for five decades. (One of his most significant works—*Permanence and Change*—was published in book form by THE NEW REPUBLIC in 1935) In an essay in 1930 that prophetically invoked a world of planned obsolescence, he closed with an image of an "indigent sage surrounded by a kingdom of last year's grandeur." He envisioned this "philosopher without means" living happily off the refuse of his fellow citizens, lacking for only one thing: a razor blade. The portrait seems uncannily appropriate to the bearded Burke himself, whom Daniel Aaron once described as "our American Coleridge, the resolute, unintimidated Thinker who constructed his systems from the treasures and middens of culture."



NABBED FOR NAFTA: Of all the side deals cut to ensure NAFTA's passage in the House, the most peculiar may have been one between Clay Shaw, a Republican congressman from Florida, and the Mexican government. Insisting that his secretary's niece had been sexually molested by a Mexican man, Representative Shaw made the arrest and extradition of the suspect a condition for supporting the treaty, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. After Mexico's attorney general declared he would take action, approval for the arrangement went straight to the top. Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca spoke with Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and the Mexican president personally agreed that justice would be served.

CLINICAL TRIALS: An Indiana judge recently sentenced fourteen abortion protesters to sit silently in an abortion clinic's waiting room for eight hours, without handing out anti-abortion literature. "I didn't want to send them to jail," said Judge Bernard Carter of the Lake County Superior Court, "but I did want them to do something that would make them uncomfortable, make them think about what they're doing." Carter's creative sentencing wins the prize for proportionate justice: a thought punishment for a thought crime.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE, PART DEUX: "This life is so difficult. This lack of liberty.... You can't go outside, traveling in Paris with the motorcycles flashing. It's not fun. You have to love Yasir Arafat—you have to really, really be in love with the person." —Suha Arafat, wife of Yasir Arafat, in *The Washington Post*, November 22.

THE LONGEST GOODBYE: Last week, Bob Packwood privately told colleagues he was planning to resign to avoid having to turn over his diaries to the Ethics Committee. It sounded like he had come to his senses at last, deciding to spare the Senate and himself further embarrassment. But then, when word of his plans leaked out, Packwood became indignant and announced instead that he would never resign, no matter what. Since it now appears that Packwood's actions lack any rational basis, his fellow senators should offer him a deal he can't refuse. He can resign and go back to Oregon. And they won't breathe a word to anybody. •

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DALLAS POSTCARD

BIG DEALEY

By Doug Smith

You don't need a calendar to know when it's late November in Dallas. Dealey Plaza, the city's only tourist attraction, fills up with those who come to mourn. The Hyatt Regency, home to the Third Assassination Symposium on John F. Kennedy (ASK), fills up with those who come to investigate.

I attended the first ASK convention and it left me seeing my hometown as a sinister, gloomy landscape peppered with unknown men carrying half-hidden rifles in their raincoats, flashing false Secret Service and CIA I.D.s—a City of Shadows in which lurk (all safely out of range) beady-eyed Mafia thugs, rogue agents, Cuban counterspies, crooked policemen, Dan Rather and Richard Nixon.

This year's ASK, however, left a different impression. Despite continued foot-dragging by the various federal agencies in complying with the 1992 Assassination Materials Review Act, the "Who Killed JFK?" controversy has moved up a couple of notches in texture and density. Oliver Stone's scattershot "everybody did it" approach is being supplanted by a general field theory in which, well, the mob did it, but nobody else was sure that they themselves didn't do it because they did do damned near everything else.

There's no question that the subject attracts its fair share of kooks, but most of those couldn't afford the conference's $175 admission price. The Hyatt lobby was populated primarily by sober-looking professional types in suits, with a smattering of liberals in sweaters and eyeglasses, cowboys in blue jeans, housewives, hippies and computer geeks. What a surprise this assemblage must have been to the media vampires, who have so stoutly embraced Gerald Posner's *Case Closed*, which makes conspiracy theorists look like well-meaning loons. The newspeople didn't let facts get in their way, though. *The Dallas Observer* treated ASK condescendingly, as if it were a "Star Trek" convention; *The Dallas Morning News* reported only on the concessions room. Although something like 80 percent of the American public thinks there was a conspiracy, only a few journalists want to admit to having been fooled. Channel 8 News in Dallas didn't mention the symposium, with its array of forensic experts, eyewitnesses, etc., but it did do a nice report on the all-American grandfatherly convention of Dallas press boys who covered the assassination the *right* way, without any of those prickly questions.

At the seminars—Intelligence Community & Defectors Panel; Oswald in Mexico City; New Leads and Revelations; A Celebration of the Women's Contributions—there were some impassioned outbursts, directed as frequently at rival researchers as at Warren Commission apologists. Alas, no chair-throwing. Most of the sessions involved interminable descriptions of evidential minutiae, most of it valid if somewhat trance-inducing. One heard phrases like "how much blood was dripping through the sheets, *that's* the discrepancy." It's a weird jargon, with assassination buzzwords such as "WCR" (Warren Commission Report), "MGT" (Multiple German Theory) and "SBT" (Single-Bullet Theory). There was more nitpicking over the details of head injuries here than one finds at most conventions. Where else would you find people arguing over the precise angle at which a flap of ruined skin and cranium was dangling in what frame of which home movie?

One is also treated to the presence of the surviving witnesses, the "royalty" of the symposium, sounding like they have told their stories a million times. And many tend to talk as if everybody has always lived in Dealey Plaza his or her whole life; its geography has the familiarity of a shared home in their conversations. The witnesses, participants, victims, agents and mystery characters sometimes sound like old friends at a high school reunion.

In his keynote address, Norman Mailer, who is researching a new book on the assassination, suggested that Oswald might have been too crazy to have been employed by the CIA, FBI or the Russians—but, because those agencies were so culpable of so many other crimes, and a full investigation of Oswald would have opened up such a can of worms, the lone nut theory had to be etched in stone. (Immediately after Mailer's speech, a total stranger approached me to assure me that Mailer must be a paid dupe of the CIA.) In other words, documents were hidden away because the feds weren't sure they weren't guilty. The establishment feared the worst—that Oswald might be traced to them. They didn't know, and they didn't *want* to know.

Mailer admitted this was an "answer" he didn't want to find. We demand a conspiracy, he said, because we're angry, and we have been manipulated. He scolded the conspiratorialists (his term) for cutting corners to serve preconceived theses. "You've all been intoxicated by the combination of vertigo and fog that accompanies study of the conspiracies." The assassination is mostly questions and few answers, he went on, but some questions are better than others—and some researchers have lost sight of that, chasing clues that lead nowhere.

To Mailer, Stone's movie *JFK* was great but wrong; a conspiracy so all-encompassing could not possibly have been kept secret. The movie offered the paradigm, not the solution. Stone mislabeled it as history, Mailer says; it's instead a treatment of "the great paranoid myth of our times," the great myth that forced Americans into either apathy or paranoia. Even compared to Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima, the assassination is the largest event, the mystery that forced us to decide whether life

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was simply absurd, or outright evil. It doesn't matter that Stone's "facts" are flawed, or that he overshot the mark, Mailer said, because there is no "accurate" version possible.

Mailer's thesis made a lot of sense—not that it can't be shot down, too. Whereas he thinks Oswald may have been too crazy to be used by the FBI, CIA, etc., plenty of ex-agents will tell you that's practically a prerequisite for lower-level tools like Oswald. Moreover, Mailer didn't benefit from the new, unpublished information disclosed on the last day of the symposium by researchers Lamar Waldron and Thom Hartmann, who presented evidence that Oswald, while being used as "bait" for the KGB by the feds, was in fact a patsy for the organized crime syndicates that had JFK killed (by two other gunmen) in revenge.

Mailer is right about one thing: we want a conspiracy. We don't trust the government, and nothing would make us happier than to see the bastards raked over the coals. As Robert Groden, the author of *High Treason,* pointed out, the Zapruder film makes us all witnesses to the assassination. If there's an answer, it won't come from the feds or the media; we'll have to find it ourselves.

DOUG SMITH is a filmmaker and freelance writer.

ON THE HILL

THE PRODUCERS

By Hanna Rosin

Ever since October, when Attorney General Janet Reno announced at a Senate hearing that government action to curb T.V. violence was not only constitutional, but essential, lawmakers of all stripes have been jumping at the chance to sanitize the airwaves. Fifteen members of Congress have submitted bills to regulate programming, and at least five more plan to. But beyond fuming about the obvious—that violence is bad—none of Capitol Hill's Bochco wannabees can agree on what violence is, or what should replace it.

"We all know what it is when we see it," says Senator Dave Durenberger. Well, not really. Most agree that the news, or a Civil War documentary, for example, both contain acceptable violence. But what about a close-up of the Rodney King tape, or a movie about the Civil War, like *Gone With the Wind*? As early as the October 20 Commerce Committee hearing, where Reno made her announcement, the senators were at odds over a definition. Senator Ernest Hollings, the committee chairman, showed a five-minute clip of CBS's "Love and War" as an example of bad programming. His staff says he chose it because he had been working on a NAFTA memo at home the night before and was "disturbed by the ruckus." The problem is, the series is a comedy and the episode Hollings showed was a satire on T.V. violence. People in a bar throw popcorn at each other until one character yells, "Stop fighting. There's too much violence on T.V." Senator Conrad Burns later told Diane English, the show's producer, he thought the episode was funny.

The tangle of proposals attempts to curb violence with a stable of pet panaceas. A bill introduced by Durenberger would require warnings on violent shows; a red "V" would flash ominously in the corner of the screen, like a network logo. Senator John Danforth has a more specific warning in mind: "The following program contains thirteen murders, five stabbings and three rapes." Senator Byron Dorgan's bill would require the FCC to issue report cards rating shows for violence and disclosing the advertisers that buy time on them. Congressman Edward Markey's popular House bill would require "V" chips to be installed in T.V.s, so parents could punch in a code to block out all programming that the networks deem violent. Hollings prefers a lower-tech approach. He would enforce nightly "family hours"—no shootings until after 10:00 p.m. Senator Paul Simon is leading the crusade. He gives the networks until January 1 to clean up or face regulation.

Simon, who isn't supporting any bill yet, says the task is easy: outlaw glamour. "A hero goes for twenty-five minutes and kills dozens of people without getting hurt—it's not real," he says. "There are no relatives crying." To solve this, Simon, along with Reno and Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, suggest more realistic violence. "Show that it really hurts when you get shot," Elders said at a September 15 House Commerce Committee hearing. "You don't get up. You really do bleed."

Others see it differently. Representative Carlos Moorhead says the problem is precisely "those violent explosions where people are shot and get hurt and are writhing in pain. They're too real." Senator John Kerrey complains about reality shows such as "COPS," with "people crying and cops running around." Their solution is more stylized violence. "Cowboy movies were better," says Moorhead. "You shoot someone and he would just slide off his horse." Senator Dorgan agrees: "Roy Rogers and Gene Autry shot people—generally bad people—and then they would stop to sing a few musical interludes, and they got on their horse and shot some more."

The faction against stylized violence is further split over the problem of cartoons, a genre of programming taken very seriously because of its direct effect on kids. Senator James Exon, for one, balks at the cartoon menace. "Even the younger mind can differentiate between a cat being smashed into a wall rather than me throwing the cat into the wall," he says. Durenberger disagrees. He cites a case in Indiana where children crawled down storm drains looking for the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. And the National Coalition on Television Violence, whose ratings are cited by several congressmen, includes "Bugs Bunny and Pals" and "Cookie's Cartoon Club" in its "very high violence" category. "Bugs Bunny can do

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

"Charter" School Boards

Have school boards become part of the problem with our schools instead of part of the cure? Plenty of critics would say *yes*, and some are ready to get rid of the democratic control of our schools altogether. That, after all, is what voucher proposals would do. But many people hesitate to discard a time-honored institution that gives voters a say in running their local schools. In "Why Not Charter School Boards?" (*American School Board Journal*, November 1993), Phillip Schlechty and Robert Cole say we don't have to choose. They have a bold idea for shaping up school boards without throwing away democratic control.

What's wrong with school boards? Even if you forget about the boards that are informal employment agencies for families and friends of board members, critics say that school boards rarely have an educational vision to guide their decisions. Most boards may do a good job picking out a new floor for the gymnasium, but, critics say, they have no framework to help them decide important educational questions—like which curriculum or which proposal for school-based management would be better. For some boards, constant squabbling stands in the way of even simple decisions.

This disharmony comes partly from the nature of school board elections. Voter turnout is very low in most places: somewhere between five and fifteen percent. As a result, it's relatively easy for special-interest candidates to get elected; and having a couple of extreme right- or left-wing board members can make it tough to achieve consensus. Boards also become politicized and contentious when members are elected to represent the interests of a particular neighborhood or a particular ethnic or racial group—which is often the case. And the fact that board members run as individuals discourages their working together. If somebody wants to get reelected, he's much more likely to build name recognition by dumping on the superintendent or opposing some measure that the rest of the board supports than by being a team player.

In an atmosphere like this, what's good for the students or the schools can end up taking second place. And few of the initiatives that are supposed to turn the schools around last long enough to succeed or fail before being replaced by new initiatives—and the same goes for superintendents. In other words, there is a lot of activity but little headway in solving educational problems.

What if school boards were elected as a slate instead of as individuals? And what if they had to run on a charter—a detailed description of long-term goals and strategies for the school district?

But what if school boards were elected as a slate instead of as individuals? And what if they had to run on a charter—a detailed description of long-term goals and strategies for the school district and how it planned to implement them? That's what Schlechty and Cole propose, and it could make an enormous difference in the way school boards operate.

Under their plan, voters would know, for example, how a slate would distribute resources among schools and what kind of control its school-based management plan would give to individual schools, as well as what schools it proposed closing. Since several slates would undoubtedly run, voters would be able to see various possibilities for their schools laid out and debated.

Voters would also know that each slate had already agreed on its priorities and policies and had ironed out potential conflicts. So there would be no need for members of a successful slate to waste time fighting and jockeying for position and trying to get themselves on the nightly news. The board's incentives would all be in the direction of being successful as a *team*, and they could jump right in and get to work putting their plan into operation.

But even a school board that pulled together would need time to bring its plans to fruition. Schlechty and Cole propose that slates be elected for at least a four-year term and preferably longer—perhaps as much as ten years. What would happen if a board was failing to carry out its promises? Schlechty and Cole propose governmental oversight and a recall mechanism so voters could get rid of a board in case of misconduct or misrepresentation.

Charter schools are a very popular idea right now, but does anybody really think we will be able to reform our education system one school at a time? States should be focusing on districts and encouraging them to look at ways of improving their performance, and school board reform is an obvious place to start. Schlechty and Cole's proposal to charter school boards instead of schools preserves democratic control at the same time as it tilts the balance away from politics and toward education. It's an outstanding and workable idea.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1993 by Albert Shanker.

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some dangerous things," says Durenberger.

Backers of the violence report card plan want the FCC to rate every act of violence, regardless of context. "Shakespeare, Beavis and Butthead, Schwarzenegger, it's all the same," says Danforth. "Just tote 'em up for bopping someone over the head, for kicking them in the kneecap." A recent test run of the ratings scheme sponsored by Dorgan at Concordia College in Minnesota, which will be released in December, rated three hours of prime-time shows and eight hours of cartoons, using NCTV's guidelines. Students were told to grade all acts of violence depending on severity. Kicking a door down with a weapon counted as a violent act, unless it was done by a police officer, which meant that it was not violent—unless the officer had no badge, in which case it was. Violence against a corpse counted only if a new character, not the one who killed the person, attacked it. Bombs counted, whether they exploded or not. In a similar NCTV study, "Toon Nite," "The Simpsons" and "Murder, She Wrote" show up on the list of the twenty most violent shows. The next highest category of fifteen includes "60 Minutes" and "Cheers."

The sanitizers on the Hill and in the administration say they will be satisfied only when T.V. becomes a "beacon" to society. "I hope the day will come when public service announcements are replaced by the shows around them," says Reno. In an interview on the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour" in October, she spelled out her plot for the ideal show: a 14-year-old kid helps raise his two siblings while his mother is recovering from crack addiction; three years later, mom goes to law school and her son graduates as valedictorian.

Simon takes this rosy scenario a step further. He proposes that "60 Minutes" and "Prime Time Live" do shows on the effects of T.V. violence. For other ideas, he looks to the "Harvard-Hollywood Initiative," a research project that, according to its director, Jay Winsten, specializes in the "pro-social uses of television." The center worked the "designated driver" concept into 160 prime-time episodes, and it has similar plans for violence. Winsten plans to meet with senior broadcasting executives next month to discuss scripts on other subjects, like "alcohol and drug abuse," "the fight against racism," "welfare reform" and "job creation."

Elders, meanwhile, has a wish-list of her own. She cites a "Beverly Hills 90210" episode on date rape as an example of good programming, and suggests the networks script shows on immunization, the importance of homework or ones in which teens contract sexually transmitted diseases or get pregnant, so they learn that not all sex is "a glamorous affair."

Indeed, according to several Republicans, the main problem on T.V. isn't violence at all. "It's sex," says Exon, taking a break from the Packwood diary hearings for an interview. To counter the problem, the senator suggests looking to the golden age of television: "Jack Benny, Desi and Lucy, Milton Berle, Edward R. Murrow and Arturo Toscanini." Exon's aide, Chris McClean, hankers for the days when the Hayes Commission set standards. "Ed Sullivan didn't show Elvis from the waist down. Rob and Laura slept in separate beds."

At least one member of Congress believes that the new standards shouldn't be limited to protecting kids from the ravages of television. Representative Jim Slattery observes that even adults spend too much time watching "crazy talk shows and soap operas," a complaint Reno has echoed. His solution? From 3:30 to 6:00 in the afternoon, Slattery would outlaw sugary sweets like "Oprah" and "Geraldo" and replace them with a high-fiber network diet of "history, science, space exploration, NAFTA." •

A Mostar bridge elegy.

FALLING DOWN

By Slavenka Drakulić

I have three photos of Mostar in front of me. One is a postcard, a sepia-colored photo printed on poor, cardboardlike paper. It is dated September 1953, when my father sent it to us on his first visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the center of the photo is the Old Bridge—all postcards of Mostar have that bridge on them, of course—and a part of the old city. "I think of you as I walk over this beautiful bridge," he wrote to my mother and me in Rijeka, Croatia. I can imagine him walking there on a warm autumn day. Coming to the middle, to the place where young boys used to jump into the river to prove their courage, he must have leaned over the stone railing and looked into the Neretva below, quick and silent as a snake. He must have stopped there, overwhelmed by the elegance of the stone construction. When his hands touched the bridge, he must have felt its smoothness and warmth, as if he had touched skin instead of stone. It was as if the bridge had a life of its own, a soul given to it by the people who had crossed it in its almost 400 years of existence. It was erected in 1566 during the Turkish Empire and, the story goes, the stones were stuck together with mortar that had been mixed with the whites of eggs. Serbs and Turks, Croats and Jews, Greeks and Albanians, Austrians and Hungarians, Catholics, Orthodox, Bogumils and Muslims—all had stopped at the same spot, rested on the same stone. I was 4 when he wrote that postcard, and I know that he was certain that one day I would see and touch the Mostar bridge, too.

My father was wrong. I did not make it. I foolishly thought the bridge would be there forever. So, I never went to Mostar, never walked from one bank of the river to the other. The bridge that saw so many wars, survived so many years, no longer exists. It collapsed in a second on November 9. All I have to remember it by are these

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three photos: before, during and after. And I wonder what my father, dead for years now, would have said if he had seen this other photo, the last before the bridge was destroyed. Would he recognize it, ragged and pitiful as an old beggar, with a makeshift wooden roof, black automobile tires and sandbags piled in a futile effort to protect it from the occasional shelling that had started with the war?

When the bridge collapsed, it was Tuesday morning. A pleasant, sunny day, much like the one when my father visited Mostar. The town is only about seventy miles from the Adriatic sea, so winter comes rather late. The bridge had been shelled since Monday afternoon. People who saw it say its collapse did not last long: at 10:30 a.m. the bridge just fell. As I look at the second picture, I try to imagine the sound of the Old Bridge falling down. A bridge like that doesn't just disappear; its collapse must have sounded like a swift, powerful earthquake, the kind that people in Mostar have never heard before. Or maybe it sounded like an old tree splitting in two—a hollow crack followed by a long silence. Whatever the sound, the river swallowed it in a single morsel. A while later, it was as if the bridge had never existed.

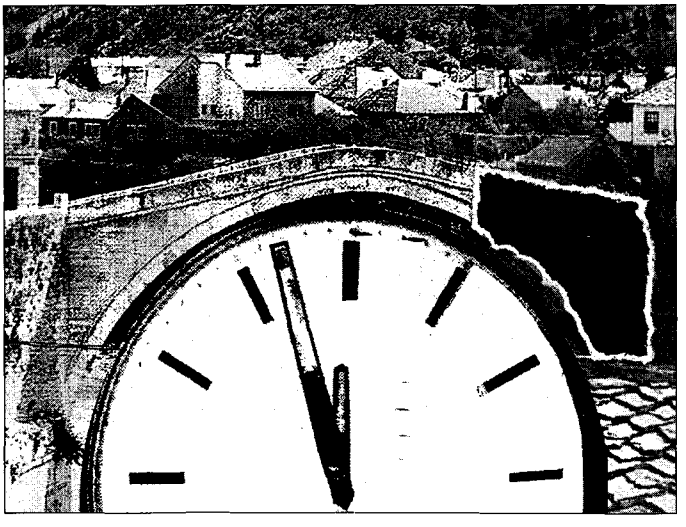

ILLUSTRATION BY MILAN TRENC FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The third photo of Mostar is one I cut out of a newspaper and carry around with me. It is in color and, paradoxically, the most beautiful of the three that I have. The sun shines over the rooftops of the old city, painting the stone houses white. The slightly swollen river, a rich, deep green, rubs along its banks like a lazy, satiated animal. Absent from this beauty, however, is the bridge. There's the beginning of its long stone arch, but if that portion were only ten feet shorter, there would be no trace of the structure at all. Only the sheer logic of the place, a feeling that a bridge belongs there, over the river, between two halves of a medieval town, tells us that something is missing. It's been a little more than two weeks, and I'm still surprised when I look at the photo. When I remember what is no longer there, I feel a spasm in my stomach, a knot in my throat. I feel death lurking in its absence.

I've heard that people in Mostar, even adults, cried when they saw that the bridge had fallen. I believe the reports, for I have seen people who are not from Mostar cry as well. An elderly journalist. A lawyer. A singer, who wept for the first time since the war started. Not so long ago the newspapers published photos of a massacre in the Bosnian Muslim village of Stupni Dol. One picture showed a middle-aged woman with a long, dark knife-cut along her throat. I don't remember anyone crying over that photo or others like it. And I ask myself: Why do I feel more pain looking at the image of the destroyed bridge than the image of the woman? Perhaps it is because I see my own mortality in the collapse of the bridge, not in the death of the woman. We expect people to die. We count on our own lives to end. The destruction of a monument to civilization is something else. The bridge, in all its beauty and grace, was built to outlive us; it was an attempt to grasp eternity. Because it was the product of both individual creativity and collective experience, it transcended our individual destiny. A dead woman is one of us—but the bridge is all of us, forever.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is well into its second year now. You would think that nothing new could happen, that, after the concentration camps and the mass rapes, the ethnic cleansing and the slow, cold death of Sarajevo, there would be no room left for imagination. But this war seems to have neither rules nor limits. Just when you think nothing could possibly surprise, something happens—even more violent, more painful, more surprising than before.

Finally—who did it? The Muslims are accusing the Croats, the Croats are accusing the Muslims. But does it even matter? For four centuries people needed that bridge and admired its beauty. The question is not who shelled and demolished it. The question is not even why someone did it—destruction is part of human nature. The question is: What kind of people do not need that bridge? The only answer I can come up with is this: people who do not believe in the future—theirs or their children's—do not need such a bridge. For me, this is the chilling measure of the photo of Mostar without its Old Bridge. This is why I would say that those people—whoever they might be—do not belong to this civilization, civilization built on the idea of time, civilization built on the idea of a future. Even if they rebuild the Mostar bridge and reconstruct it meticulously, they are barbarians.

Holding the old postcard in my hand, I regret that I have not been there. My father is dead. The sepia color is washed out; the existing postcards of Mostar with the Old Bridge in the middle will probably disappear, too. My daughter will only remember a story about a beautiful stone bridge that, once upon a time, existed in a far away country shattered by a long, long war. And I myself have no memory of my own of the bridge now, when I need it the most.

SLAVENKA DRAKULIĆ is the author of *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War* (W. W. Norton).

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The war over grazing fees.

FREE RANGE

By William Kittredge

Late in the dry summer of 1943 I turned 11 out on the high sagebrush and lava-rock deserts of southeastern Oregon with my grandfather's cowhand crew. We went at our work in old ways, on horseback from daylight until the work was done, riding out from a chuck wagon, changing camp every day, looking after my family's cattle on several hundred thousand acres of rangeland we though of as ours.

We were eating dust with our handkerchiefs tied over our faces like movie cowhands, moving a thousand head of mother cows and spring calves, heading them in toward the ranch, maybe thirty miles west, where there was water. The desert had dried up in the last weeks. The overgrazed banks of wet-weather creeks had been tromped to dust, classical riparian damage that would lead to gully-washing in the spring.

Buckaroos never carried drinking water. Any giving in to the difficulties of the country was a sign of weakness. A kid who yearned to be a cowhand would keep his thirst to himself. What I recall most vividly from those brutal days is the afternoon I got off my horse and drank what I knew could be piss from a cow's track in muddy ground alongside a spring that wasn't seeping anymore in West Road Gulch on the north side of the Beatty Buttes. The old hands grinned. I thought to hell with you.

The point I'm trying to make has to do with learning to love a place because the story of your life has become part of the story of that place. I won't forget West Road Gulch. I grew up knowing watershed lines in that desert county as well as I know the lines in my hands; they're equally part of me. As a consequence, public lands issues in the West resonate in me like a struck bell; the same is true for so many Westerners.

My family owned the MC Ranch in Warner Valley, on the Oregon-Nevada border, more than 20,000 acres of irrigated land, most of it swamp before we drained it. Connected to that property was a federal grazing lease on several hundred thousand acres of high desert land—thirty miles wide and fifty miles deep. Such leases were administered by officials of the Grazing Service in the Department of the Interior. The service had been established under the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 as a means of bringing to order de facto grazing on the public domain.

But the Grazing Service was ridiculously underfinanced. In 1935 it had sixty employees to administer about 80 million acres. Range management in any local sense was impossible. Service officials were in thrall to advisory boards composed of ranchers who sure didn't want any advice from people who worked for the government. Thus, that sweep of territory the government leased to my family was ours, we thought, in any sensible way of understanding the world, to use as we saw fit.

In 1946 the Grazing Service and General Land Office were consolidated into the Bureau of Land Management, but things didn't change much. We mostly regarded the BLM range management experts as impractical college boys, and tried to ignore them when they asked us to change our grazing practices. "You got to keep the cattle out of that Hill Camp country for a couple of years," they would say, and we would say, "Sure," and smile, and then do as we damned pleased.

Around 1960—this may be an apocryphal story, point is we believed it and loved it—a man from the BLM walked out into a hayfield to give some old rancher an earful about running too many cattle on his allotment. The rancher took after him with a gun. The chase led through the fields until the fellow from the BLM climbed up in a stack of loose meadow hay and hid. The old rancher lit the haystack afire. "Cooked that sonofabitch," the old rancher would say, at least according to the way I heard the story. It was clearly us against them. They were trying to tell us how to take care of our country, which we loved even as we caused some damage now and then, and we hated them for their trouble.

These days the BLM looks after 260 million acres of public rangeland, 10 percent of all land in the contiguous forty-eight states. Some 28,000 people and corporations hold permits to graze on those lands. The BLM is currently charging grazing fees of $1.86 per animal unit month (AUM) and spending some $3.70 per AUM on administration (grazing on comparable private land would cost from $5 to $15 per AUM). Consequently, the BLM will lose around $52 million this year.

Since the fur trade, the West has been an extraction colony, to be mined, logged off, grazed down to dirt and plowed under for the economic benefit of the rest of the nation. Since Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark into the wilderness, economic development in the region has been supported by federal subsidies. But now the region is mostly settled and developed. A majority of its residents lives in cities; many are transplants; most have nothing to do with its traditional industries: logging, mining, ranching. They think loss-leader, anti-environmental, pro-development subsidies for these industries should come to an end.

It was no surprise, then, that these new Westerners applauded the Clinton administration in August, when it announced its plan to raise grazing fees to $4.28 per AUM over three years. Nor was it surprising when they happily supported a $3.45 compromise put forward by Senator Harry Reid of Nevada. What was surprising was that their senators, Max Baucus of Montana, Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado, Alan Simpson of

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Wyoming, Pete Domenici of New Mexico and others, killed the proposal with a filibuster in early November. Their rhetoric rang of Old West themes like saving the small rancher, but everyone knew they were blowing a certain amount of smoke. A raise in fees could easily be managed so it wouldn't ruin small ranchers. After all, most of the land is in the hands of large organizations: the Rock Springs Grazing Association of Wyoming (1,000,000 acres); J.R. Simplot of Idaho (964,000 acres); the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (800,000 acres); the Mormon Church; the Zenchiku Corporation of Japan (40,000 acres). These groups, none of which are living hand-to-mouth, would be asked to pay a fair price for value received. The concept is about as revolutionary as the graduated income tax.

No, the real issue has to do with real estate and the fact that the right to graze on public land is tied to the value of private property. The story goes like this: the General Accounting Office has reported that public lands under BLM management are commonly overgrazed, and that cattle are often given preference over wildlife. In its 1991 report the GAO recommended that Congress halt all livestock grazing on 20 million acres of arid lands in Arizona, New Mexico, California, Utah and Nevada. In response to these problems, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt announced in August that he wanted to revoke the grazing leases of ranchers who fell short of the government's environmental standards. Here, I have to think, we are at the real reason behind the intransigence of the Western senators.

When you start talking about revoking grazing rights, you are messing with the entire structure of property ownership in the ranchland West. As Charles Wilkinson points out in *Crossing the Next Meridian: Land, Water and the Future of the West*, "Here we can appreciate the actual stakes." Federal grazing leases are commonly capitalized into the value of ranches. By law the land belongs to the public, but in the workings of the market Western ranchers often literally buy their leases along with their ranches. Banks commonly make loans with that in mind. A ranch worth $1 million, for example, might only be worth $250,000 if stripped of its grazing leases.

So it's easy to understand why ranchers are infuriated at the idea that their grazing leases might be revoked. It's reasonable to assume Western bankers might call their senators, asking questions about what the hell is going on. Environmental concerns? What about collateral for thousands of big-time loans? Senators, we expect, pay attention when bankers are on the line.

We imagine places are ours because our stories adhere to them. West Road Gulch, Guano Valley, Hawk's Mountain, Sagehen Springs, I love the names of places in that long-ago land where I grew up. On starry midsummer nights, when I dream of being a boy, I imagine my bedroll beside the M C chuck wagon, and with utter clarity see the moon rise over the black reef of Steens Mountains on the eastern horizon. That country is home because it's where I learned to be whatever I am.

But we sometimes wreck places, and people we love, thinking ownership justifies exploitation. Some ranchers have misused the country they say they love, territory they think they own but don't. And some of them are bound to lose their grazing rights. There's a serious reckoning coming up in the West. For many, I'm afraid, it will be heartbreaking.

WILLIAM KITTREDGE is the author, most recently, of *Hole in the Sky: A Memoir* (Vintage).

Clinton's new New Deal.

MAXIMUM SECURITY

By Mickey Kaus

On October 8 and 12, President Clinton gave two speeches in which he advanced "security" as the theme of his presidency. "My goal," he said, "is to make individuals in this country and families in this country secure enough and strong enough to be able to face and make the changes we must make." The speeches flopped. Military embarrassments in Somalia and Haiti had thrown the press into one of its cynical anti-Clinton cycles. "ONE CLINTON PROMISE FITS ALL ISSUES," was the half-sneering headline in *The New York Times.*

Some cynicism was certainly called for. On one level, the "new security" was a speechwriter's device, a product of the search for what one skeptical Democrat called "a unified field theory" of Clinton's tenure. The Clinton spinners didn't help matters by flaunting the artificiality of the process in self-congratulatory interviews. "We've been reaching for a consistency that makes things reinforce one another rather than compete with one another," said Stanley Greenberg, Clinton's poll-taker. "[T]his is a breakthrough in how to give people hope in a world that is changing." Clinton stepped on his own weltanschauung in the second speech by failing to actually deliver much of the prepared text. We haven't heard much about security since.

But it will be back. For one thing, the formulation seems to have come from the president himself, rather than from his aides. For another, voters do seem unusually worried about losing the three kinds of security identified by Clinton: "economic security, health security and personal security" (meaning freedom from crime). And the idea that an activist government, by offering social guarantees, can encourage productive economic risk-taking has been a key neoliberal claim at least since Gary Hart's 1984 campaign. It's a

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good part of what Clinton, too, seems to be about.

Haven't modern Democrats, starting with Franklin Roosevelt, always been preoccupied with security? Well, yes. FDR used the word no fewer than eleven times in his 1935 State of the Union address, the founding document of our welfare state. But while Clinton grandly compares his task with FDR's, his motives are subtly different. FDR wasn't worried about promoting economic "change." The chaos of the Depression had produced all too much change, from padlocked factories to the Okie diaspora. Clinton, on the other hand, worries that Americans might successfully erect defenses against capitalism's wrenching dislocations—trade barriers, for example. He fears stasis, not collapse. In a sense, he worries we might obtain too *much* security, of an immobilizing kind. "What's the deal we have to make with the American working people in order to ... get them to the point where they will have to make the changes?" he asked on October 8. The deal, in essence, is a swap—one kind of security for another. The government promises you health coverage and retraining, but you must be willing to "change jobs at least seven times" in your life.

Some of what is to be traded away in this New New Deal is the security offered by the Old New Deal (union-negotiated work rules, unreinvented bureaucracies). That's one indication of the relative freshness of Clinton's approach. It's hard to imagine Walter Mondale telling Americans he can't protect their jobs because "the economy is creating and losing millions of jobs constantly."

"Security" also offers Clinton a dignified path of retreat from an unfulfillable, paleoliberal promise to narrow the gap between rich and poor. During the campaign, and in Clinton's initial budget documents, the "alarming rise in inequality" was laid squarely at Reagan's door. Now Clinton gives speeches noting that rising inequality has been a worldwide trend for decades. Soon, as the economy recovers and the rich start to get richer once more, he will drop the subject altogether. What he has to offer, in place of income equality, is security.

Yet the security pitch is not without problems, and they are worth confronting before the theme resurfaces. As an initial matter, it isn't, as Clinton claims, "self-evident" that people are unable to "change their lives" unless they "feel a high level of security." There is risk, after all, on both sides of any decision to change. And the risk of *not* changing—a form of *in*security—has been the traditional spur to action. Immigrants did not come to America because they were secure in their homelands; the American economy is more productive today because workers and unions had the daylights scared out of them by the Japanese in the '80s.

What Clinton wants is to reduce the risks on one side of the equation—the risks of change. The obvious danger is that by attending so ostentatiously to middle-class insecurities, Clinton may cultivate them. "It's O.K. to be overwhelmed with worry about the future," Clinton's speeches seem to say, as if he were leading an Anxieties Anonymous group. At times he treats Americans as emotional cripples. ("Unless we can be secure in our health care, I'm not sure the American people will ever be able to recover the personal optimism and courage to open up to the rest of the world.") In order to plug anti-crime initiatives into his framework, he resorts to discussing security at a near-psychobabble level. "If you spend all your time waiting for the other shoe to drop ... it is very difficult to have the space—the mental space and the emotional space—to think about the changes." That is a long way from the commonsense insight that people are more willing to change jobs if they can keep their health coverage.

A second danger is that Clinton won't be able to deliver some forms of security. He talks of the need to "rebuild the great middle class," but he can hardly guarantee every worker a middle-class lifestyle. Nor can he guarantee that people who make it into the middle class won't slip back out. Many New Deal security programs wound up attempting to guard against this sort of painful downward mobility. Thus, the more you make, the higher your unemployment check, the bigger your Social Security check. Out-of-work professionals can keep getting government checks while rejecting jobs that unemployed janitors have to take. Should egalitarian Democrats really spend money on social programs that artificially sustain the more successful in the manner to which they have become accustomed? However that question is answered, heroic attempts to prevent downward mobility are hardly conducive to flexibility.

Clinton doesn't talk of preventing downward mobility. But he does say we need to be "secure in our work." What can that mean, if we are going to be constantly changing jobs? It seems to mean that we will constantly be offered retraining. "The day somebody goes on unemployment," Clinton declared, "they should know what jobs will be available within driving distance of their home. They should be able to match their skills for those jobs, and where the deficiencies are they should be able to choose a training program." This doesn't sound all that secure to me, and it is surely a sanitized scenario, given the unpromising history of government training efforts.

There is another, darker issue buried under all the smooth talk of retraining. The new economic security, according to Clinton, "must be rooted in a continuing capacity to learn." But some people have more capacity to learn than others. The more "lifelong learning" is required, the more the economy will sort itself out into the skilled and schooled at the top and the unskilled poor at the bottom. Openness to change and global competition means more prosperity, but it also means nastier social divisions between smart and not-so-smart Americans. Amazingly, Clinton managed to sell NAFTA without ever frankly addressing this concern, but it lies at the heart of the unwillingness of many people to go gently into a future of endless re-education.

Ultimately, the idea of security doesn't quite inspire. Clinton's "three securities" aren't going to keep the

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country from splitting apart along economic lines. But, in conjunction with another New Democrat talisman, "personal responsibility," they might help. The two themes initially seem to coexist uneasily. (If we bear personal responsibility for our fates, how secure are we?) Clinton's October 12 speech ended with a clunky attempt at reconciliation. "But none of us can be secure until we all take greater responsibility for our own lives.... Our health will not be secure until we seek responsibility for seeking preventive care."

That can't be the point. Rather, it must be that most of Clinton's promises of protection are conditioned on responsible behavior, especially civility and a willingness to work. These are principles that apply to all Americans, and hence they are principles that potentially unite us. Such a formulation also would allow the president to rope welfare reform into his security structure. What does Clinton's welfare plan announce, after all, except that if you are on the dole and are willing to work, the government will guarantee you a living wage and a last-resort job. If you are unwilling to work, on the other hand, you aren't going to get much in the way of security. Clinton hasn't quite said that, yet. But he's getting close. •

The end of drug research?

BITTER PILLS

By Ruth Shalit

In her speech presenting the president's health reform plan to Congress on September 28, Hillary Rodham Clinton assailed prescription drug makers as a prime example of those "who profit from the status quo." To make her case, she pointed to Ergamisol, a drug developed by Johnson & Johnson for deworming animals that was later found to help cure colon cancer in humans. "I'm still struck by the story I heard the other day on National Public Radio," the First Lady told House members. "You had [a] drug being charged at six cents a pill for use in sheep. When it came on the market [for humans], the drug manufacturer started charging $6 a pill.... There was no justification whatsoever for that difference in cost." Mrs. Clinton liked the story enough to recycle it during a Senate appearance the next day.

The Clintons have laid much of the blame for inflated health care costs on the prescription drug industry's soaring prices and profit margins. Their concern is understandable. In the late 1980s and early '90s, prescription drug prices rose at more than twice the national inflation rate. The industry's earnings surged by 400 percent, giving pharmaceutical manufacturers the highest profit margin of any major industry in America. To lower health care costs and expand access, the Clinton proposal includes a prescription drug benefit in the basic health plan and extends it to Medicare patients as well. And to help cover the costs of the new benefits, the government would extract $2.5 billion a year in discounts from pharmaceutical manufacturers on all drugs purchased under the Medicare program.

Drug companies would also be subject to stringent new regulations. An advisory council on breakthrough drugs, chaired by Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, would "examine the reasonableness" of new drug prices and publicly chastise companies that charge too much. Suspect companies would have to submit their books for Shalala's perusal. As a final measure, the Shalala panel could exclude from Medicare and Medicaid—which is estimated at between 20 percent and 30 percent of the market—any drug deemed "excessively or inappropriately priced."

But in their zeal for radical reform, the Clintons may have gone too far. The new plan has sent tremors of fear through the pharmaceutical industry, which insists that the new restrictions will strangle the development of new drugs. "It's crippling," says Leigh Thompson, chief scientific officer of Eli Lilly & Co. "It's absolutely devastating. They're going to trade off cheap drugs tomorrow for no new drugs for our children." Pharmaceutical executives like Thompson say the industry needs the incentive of high revenues to undertake the kind of expensive R&D projects that produce breakthrough medications.

Take Ergamisol, for example, the drug Hillary Clinton excoriated on Capitol Hill. Her anecdote about its high price, while rhetorically galvanizing, left out a few relevant facts. "We didn't just take a sheep pill and start feeding it to people saying, 'Hey, look! It works,' " says Robert Kniffin of Johnson & Johnson. Ergamisol's main chemical ingredient, levamisole, was discovered in the 1960s by a J&J subsidiary in Belgium. Before releasing the drug for human use, the company conducted 1,400 studies involving 40,000 patients over a course of thirty years—at a cost of about $60 million. After experiments with lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and various kinds of cancer failed, the drug was tried against colon cancer. Patients taking the drug had a 50 percent higher survival rate. In 1990 Ergamisol was granted approval by the FDA. But its patent protection expires in 1994, giving J&J just four years to recoup its R&D expenditures. And, at $1,250 for a year's supply, Ergamisol is one of the cheaper cancer drugs available.

Ergamisol's development costs are typical. And for every new drug like it that eventually makes it to market, scores of others fizzle out in the lab. According to a study conducted by the Office of Technology Assessment, the probability that a drug under development

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will reach production is less than one in 5,000. Only three in ten drugs actually launched recoup their research investment. Says Robert Allnut of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association: "When you restrict the ability of the blockbuster drugs to recover their investment, you create a huge disincentive for the development of breakthroughs for cancer, Alzheimer's and AIDS."

To guard against that possibility, the six biggest pharmaceutical firms (Searle, Upjohn, Eli Lilly & Co., Hoffman-LaRoche Inc., Warner-Lambert and Bristol-Myers Squibb) have hired Jody Powell, of the swank lobbying firm Powell-Tate, to plead their cause on Capitol Hill. But even an intense lobbying effort won't kill the political momentum for health reform.

The administration's criticism of drug prices is already having a financial effect. In 1991 capitalization for the ten largest publicly traded pharmaceutical companies was $290 billion. As of September 1993, it was $175 billion. In a year and a half, the industry has lost almost half of its equity, according to the brokerage firm Smith, Barney, Harris, Upham & Co. "Investors are saying, the party's over—the government's coming in," laments one drug company executive. "They're taking their gains and cashing in."

If the prospect of health care reform is denting big drug companies' stocks, it's wreaking havoc on small biotechnology companies. Since Bill Clinton lashed out at drug prices in February, the total market value of biotech stocks has plummeted 50 percent. Industry heads say that's because the specter of government price controls has stunted their ability to innovate. With few products actually on the market, 90 percent of industry revenues come from venture capital. A recent survey by the accounting firm Ernst & Young found that more than half of the larger biotechnology companies do not have enough capital on hand to keep them going for two years. "Proponents of government price controls don't know what it takes to attract investment for projects that won't show a payoff, if at all, for at least ten years," says Henri Termeer of the Genzyme Corporation, which manufactures Ceredase, a cure for Gaucher's disease. "They have no idea what investors need in return for investing $100 million at a time when you can't even show them a project. The threat of price controls has done more to damage the biotech industry than anything else that has happened in the industry's history."

But drug industry critics say social justice demands radical reform. "The drug companies continue to say we need these high prices, we need these exorbitant increases in our profits in order to find the cure for AIDS, cancer, etc.," says Senator David Pryor of Arkansas, a co-sponsor of the Clinton plan. "It's wonderful to live in a country when we have all of the research that we have and when we can bring to the market these new drugs. But not if they are beyond the ability for our people to pay for them."

Pryor may not have to worry about overpriced AIDS cures much longer. Many companies are already postponing or cutting back on clinical trials. AlphaGen, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is scaling back on the drugs Thymacin and Alpha One—aimed at fighting hepatitis B, hepatitis C and AIDS. "The preliminary data looks interesting," says AlphaGen President Vincent Simmon. "We'd like to pursue it. But that means spending money we don't have." After Clinton announced in February that drug price controls were "on the table," AlphaGen's stock value fell by a third. Dick Bagley, president of ImmuLogic, says his company is also postponing clinical trials on drugs to fight rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes and ovarian cancer. "We're waiting for a less hostile climate," he says. The White House "seems to be going way out of its way to say breakthrough drugs can't be priced in a free market system."

Similarly, the San Diego-based Viagene Inc., which runs one of the more promising AIDS vaccine programs, last month canceled a $425 million stock offering because of investors' fears about price controls, says Robert Abbott, the company's chief executive officer. It has also abandoned research on preventive vaccines for cancer and AIDS, and delayed development of an immunotherapeutic HIV vaccine. "There's no question in my mind that the Hillary effect has put a nail in the coffin on our ability to raise money," says Abbott.

But it's not just Hillary who's to blame. Regardless of the impact health reform will have on the industry, current market forces are already forcing down drug prices and profits across the board. The Clinton plan is merely accelerating a trend in price discounting that would have happened anyway. Competition between generics and brand-name drugs have squeezed profits in the prescription drug industry. Managed-care companies and other bulk purchasers are now able to demand large discounts from the drug manufacturers. And in February, seventeen major drug firms joined in a voluntary pledge to hold price increases to the general rate of inflation. Sure enough, drug prices have risen only 3.9 percent over the course of the year. That's down from nearly 10 percent in 1991.

The Clintonites have little sympathy for the plaintive lament of drug companies. They claim the industry is crying mostly crocodile tears. And they may be right. Although the industry expects to spend more than $10 billion on research this year, it will also spend as much as $11 billion on promotion and marketing. Anyone who fears that drug companies will soon have trouble paying the electric bill needs only look at the supposedly beset and beleaguered DuPont Merck Pharmaceutical Company. Two weeks ago, the company announced price increases on four of its major drugs, including Coumadin, an anti-clotting drug, Percodan and Percocet, which reduce pain, and Symmetrel, an anti-viral drug. Coumadin, for example, which previously cost $2.50 per 100 pills, will now sell for $40. That's an increase of 700 percent. •

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Robert Rubin's artful role.

OLD MASTER

By John B. Judis

Every morning at 8:00, the White House senior staff gathers around the long table in the cavernous Roosevelt Room to discuss the day's business. Robert Rubin, gaunt and graying with hollowed eyes that exude a gentle weariness, sits at the table's side, never at its head, and rarely speaks except to keep the meeting moving along. When he does make a point, he is almost apologetic, prefacing his remarks with phrases like, "In my humble opinion." He is the picture of self-effacement, yet he is in control of the meeting. And afterward, if anything needs to be conveyed to the president, he is the one to do it.

Rubin, formerly co-chairman of the Wall Street investment bank Goldman Sachs, is director of the president's National Economic Council, an organization established by Bill Clinton to coordinate the administration's economic and domestic policy. Unlike many White House officials, Rubin does not particularly enjoy appearing on television and dislikes the badinage of radio talk shows. "Talk shows are tough, a very tough medium," he says. While he is willing to speak to the press, he is not eminently quotable, and tries to suppress any sign of what he regards as egotism. And yet, though Rubin has been far less visible to the public than Clinton aides George Stephanopoulos and David Gergen, or even Rubin's Wall Street counterpart, Deputy Treasury Secretary Roger Altman, he has probably had more influence over the administration's direction than any of them.

In the ten months since Clinton's inauguration, Rubin has molded the NEC into the center of White House domestic policy-making, the anteroom through which proposals pass before they are reviewed by the president. Rubin conceived his role as honest broker, organizing options for the president, but he has not been hesitant about articulating his own views. Rubin, of course, downplays his role. When I interviewed him in his cluttered West Wing quarters, he described himself as "a small part of a larger organism." But in the epic battle of the budget, which consumed the administration from December 1992 through August, Rubin defined the White House's economic objective of deficit-cutting and toned down its tax message—replacing a "soak the rich" populism with an appeal to business confidence.

The NEC director also played an important role in other areas. While Rubin was less prominent during the political fight over the North American Free Trade Agreement, Rubin and Secretary of the Treasury Lloyd Bentsen were initially the treaty's main champions. When enthusiasm for NAFTA waned last summer, Rubin, who had spearheaded Goldman Sachs's business in Mexico, persuaded Clinton to launch a national campaign headed by Chicagoan Bill Daley. When Democrats in Congress argued for denying most-favored nation trading status to China, Rubin fought successfully to maintain access to China's burgeoning markets. And, concerned about costs, he convinced the president and Hillary Rodham Clinton to phase in the administration's health reform program gradually—even delaying its full implementation until after Clinton's first term. His has been a moderating, pro-business, even Darman-like influence within a Democratic administration that came into office as the populist tribune of the forgotten middle class.

But Rubin has also been an avid proponent of aid to cities and the poor. When it looked as if the Senate was going to kill the administration's proposal for inner-city enterprise zones, Rubin mobilized the White House to rescue the plan. He also established a Community Enterprise Board to carry out the proposal and to seek other means of addressing city poverty. His view of the urban poor—as victims of what he calls "historical circumstances"—has much in common with Jesse Jackson's. He is a seeming mix of contradictions: a modest man in rumpled suits who wields power effectively; a tight-fisted fiscal conservative who worries about the disadvantaged.

Inside the White House, Rubin gets high marks for the way he has run the NEC. "I think he has created an arena within which individuals can speak their minds and make their points, with a minimum of ego-jostling," says domestic policy adviser William Galston. "I have never seen the least hint of intimidation." Rubin's influence is also deeply appreciated on Wall Street. "Thank God for people like Rubin to prevent Clinton from shooting off to the moon," says one of Rubin's former colleagues.

But Rubin and the NEC receive far less enthusiastic reviews on Capitol Hill and from Clinton officials outside the West Wing—although they invariably speak off

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the record. Says one top congressional aide, "On the budget, Rubin had a lack of knowledge about what was politically realistic and how to get decisions made." Clinton officials blame Rubin for muting the president's populist appeal and for betraying the president's promises to increase public investment. "It's a rude awakening to see an investment banker with all this power in a Democratic administration," laments one White House policy consultant.

When I asked Rubin where he got his political views, he winced at the vagueness of the term "views." Rubin is sensitive to words and phrases the way a sectarian is to creeds; he is always looking for the right one and is visibly discomfited when he encounters a false idol. It's a kind of fussiness, but also part of his deadpan earnestness and exactitude. I tried "opinions," "sentiments" and then "sensibilities." "Sensibilities is a good word," he said. "Where do anybody's come from? I don't know if this is relevant, but my mother voted for Henry Wallace in 1948. It gives you a little sense of where her sensibilities came from, even though she grew up in a prosperous Brooklyn family." Substitute voting for McGovern in 1972 and the same could be said of Rubin himself.

Rubin was born in Brooklyn in 1938, and reared in Miami Beach, where his parents moved after World War II, and where his father continued a successful career as a real estate lawyer. In spite of their wealth, his parents, both of whom were Jewish, identified with the downtrodden. They were of a piece with Miami Beach—an enclave of Democratic liberalism in a conservative Southern state. Rubin went to public school and then to Harvard, where he encountered a different, but related kind of sensibility. "It was very much an opening of eyes in terms of the notion that so many things you took for granted could be questioned in ways I'd never thought about before," Rubin said. "Harvard was an experience of learning to ask questions, and if you look at the world that way, you come to the conclusion that issues are matters of probability, not certainty."

When Rubin entered Harvard in 1956, students with expansive intellectual or political interests often felt constrained by the awaiting world of the "gray flannel suit." While they eventually resigned themselves to a career that was an extension of what their parents had done or wanted them to do, they remained haunted for the rest of their lives by a "road not taken." When I mentioned the concept to him, Rubin immediately seized upon it. "For me," he said, "I think there has always been a road not taken."

At Harvard, Rubin wanted to major in philosophy, but settled for economics. After graduating, he went to the London School of Economics for two years and then to Yale Law School, where he took courses on "jurisprudence rather than contracts." Despite this, he ended up at the corporate law firm of Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton. Two years later, still casting about for a career, he decided to try investment banking, partly, he said, because he thought "it might provide a place for me to do other things that interested me."

Rubin took a job with Goldman Sachs. Assigned to the firm's highly successful arbitrage department, he found he enjoyed using Goldman's capital to speculate on how a merger and acquisition would affect companies' stock prices. "It turned out to suit my temperament," he said. "You had to make a lot of decisions. You had to keep your emotions out of decisions. You had to be a mental yellow pad. You had to be able to make the decisions without all the information you needed to have, because there wasn't time to get it all." Rubin rose quickly: he became a partner in 1971, the head of arbitrage in 1977 and co-chairman of the firm in 1990. Along the way he absorbed what Goldman partners call their "culture."

Once one of the lesser German Jewish firms that lived off the business too sordid for J. P. Morgan & Co. and Kuhn Loeb & Co., Goldman now stands, along with Morgan Stanley, at the pinnacle of the investment banking profession. Much of the success has to do with the fact that during the conglomerate binge of the '60s, Goldman decided it would not help finance hostile takeovers. "We didn't represent raiders," says limited partner Roy Smith, now a professor of finance at New York University. "We had so many clients that we risked raiding one of our own. So we played defense, and it proved to be a better business." Though the firm was tainted by the scandals of the '80s—Robert Freeman, who succeeded Rubin as head of arbitrage, went to jail for insider trading—it was not permanently tarnished.

Unlike every other major investment bank, Goldman also resisted the temptation to gain capital by going public; it remains a private partnership whose partners' primary loyalty is to each other and to their clients rather than to their investors. As a partnership, Goldman placed a premium on the partners' willingness to subordinate their own fame and power to that of the firm. Decisions are not by consensus, but they invariably involve extensive consultation. Rubin learned to be a manager within this culture. Partners cannot remember him ever raising his voice at a subordinate or even getting angry. According to Frank Brosens, who served under him in arbitrage, the only time he ever became annoyed was when subordinates expressed what he considered to be unwarranted certainty. Rubin also learned to make partners and associates feel that they were contributing. "He would ask fifteen people what they thought of a situation," Brosens recalled. "You'd feel great, because he had understood and incorporated your views into his decision-making process, even if in the end he came to a different conclusion."

Since Goldman Chairman Sidney Weinberg cast his lot with Roosevelt in 1932, Goldman Sachs has been largely a Democratic firm. The Goldman partners were drawn to the Democrats partly out of social conviction. But they also gravitated to the party because their Yankee counterparts on Wall Street dominated the upper circles of the GOP. Being a Democratic contributor was a chance for a Goldman partner to do good. And it didn't hurt the firm's business, an important part of which

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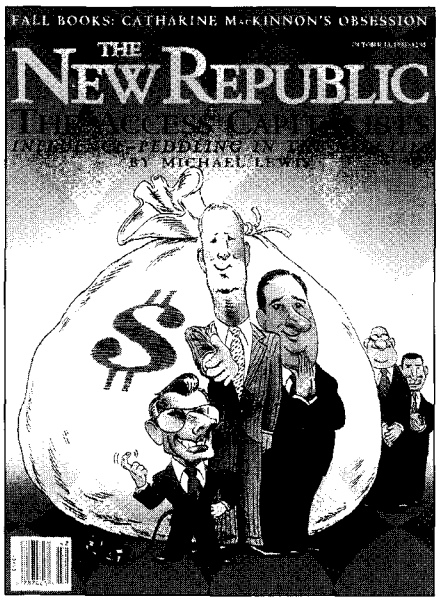

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consisted of underwriting the bonds floated by Democratic administrations.

In 1972, the year after he became a partner, Rubin decided to become involved in national Democratic politics. He opposed the Vietnam War, and supported civil rights and the Great Society, but had his doubts that Democratic politicians knew how to pay for the latter. "I remember going to a speech by a well-known Democratic senator who was talking about social programs he believed in, and I sat there and said, 'I basically agree with him,' but I kept waiting to hear who was going to pay for it." Rubin asked Goldman partner Joe Fowler, the former secretary of the treasury under Lyndon Johnson, whom he should talk to about getting into politics. Fowler recommended Robert Strauss, a Dallas lawyer who was then the treasurer of the Democratic National Committee.

Over lunch at Goldman Sachs, Strauss proposed to Rubin that he help him raise money for Democratic House and Senate candidates. "Bob told me, 'Look, I am treasurer of the party, and the probabilities are very high that Nixon is going to win this thing. It would be terrible to have a Democratic House ousted. I am going to spend my time ... trying to raise money for the House and Senate. You've never been involved. Why don't you work with me?'" The two men could not have been more outwardly dissimilar: the lean, reserved Rubin and the round, ebullient Strauss exuding good-old-boy banter. ("He's a rotten little son of a bitch," Strauss quipped when I asked his opinion of Rubin.) But the two men became close friends. While Rubin doesn't like being called a "protégé" of Strauss—the word clearly offends him—other Goldman partners use the term. Strauss says he urged Clinton to make Rubin the head of the new NEC.

Under Strauss's tutelage, Rubin became the national party's main money-raiser in New York, organizing efforts for Jimmy Carter in 1976 and 1980, Walter Mondale in 1984 and Michael Dukakis in 1988. Rubin's relationship with Strauss also proved profitable for the firm. As a senior partner at Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, Strauss directed business toward Goldman Sachs, and vice versa. Although Strauss denies it, he may have also helped Goldman become Russia's official investment banking adviser in 1992, when he was the United States ambassador and Rubin, as co-chair, was attempting to expand the firm's international operations.

Rubin saw his role as understudy to Strauss as a prelude to more substantial participation in party councils. "It seemed to me that the way to get involved was to get involved on the political side, which was fund-raising," he explained. "So if you establish yourself that way, you would have a seat at the table, and then you could get involved more broadly in political activities." By the Mondale campaign, Rubin was ready. "I don't want this to sound the wrong way. I don't want to sound egotistical, but I also had the opportunity to talk to him about economic issues," Rubin said.

Rubin brought Wall Street's warning of deficit spending to the Democrats. In July 1984, before the Democratic convention, Rubin and Altman were invited to Mondale's home in Minnesota to discuss the candidate's economic platform. Mondale emerged from the meeting determined to focus in the fall campaign on cutting the deficit by raising taxes. Perhaps, if Mondale had been elected and had put Rubin's highly impolitic recommendations into effect, the country might have been saved the worst excesses of the '80s.

In the late '80s, Rubin was part of Mario Cuomo's Commission on Trade and Competitiveness. Originally thought to be a platform committee for the New York governor's presidential run, the commission ended up having a significant impact on Democratic policy—introducing, among other things, the idea for a National Economic Council. Rubin strongly endorsed the commission's radical stand on rebuilding cities. In the 1992 report he personally oversaw the section on "Economic Inclusion: The Challenge of Inner-City Poverty," which attributed poverty to the disappearance of urban manufacturing jobs rather than to individual sloth or welfare largess. Rubin endorsed an expansion of spending on early education and a "new national public employment program." But in 1988 and 1992 he appended to the reports his reservations on the commission's stands on government intervention and trade. "I would personally opt for somewhat less government involvement and clearer adherence to free trade as an ideal," he wrote in 1988.

Rubin's position on government intervention and trade changed, however. While in 1988 he dismissed any effort at subsidizing industry, he conceded by 1992 that government must play a role "where private market forces by their nature will not function effectively." In 1992 he also conceded that government should "vigorously seek to reduce ... significant trade impediments." He explained later: "I guess we have all learned from our experience with Japan. I do believe in free trade, but I believe in two-way free trade, and we haven't had two-way free trade." Nevertheless, he recoils at the term "industrial policy" ("I don't even know what the word means," he commented after I used the term a second time).

In the fall of 1991 Rubin and David Sawyer, head of the public relations firm Sawyer-Miller, held a series of dinners in Manhattan for Democratic presidential candidates. Clinton was the clear hit. What impressed Rubin was that the Arkansas governor seemed to share his priorities of reducing the deficit while increasing spending for schools and cities. "At the end of the dinner, I thought to myself, 'This guy is talking about the very same things I am concerned about, and he is saying the same kinds of things in response to them that I believe.'"

Rubin and other Goldman partners, including Brosens, Barrie Wigmore and Kenneth Brody, started raising money for Clinton. One fund-raising dinner, held on February 10 as the candidate was reeling from allegations about Gennifer Flowers and draft-dodging, netted $750,000. (Goldman Sachs was Clinton's largest business contributor, donating more than $100,000 from its

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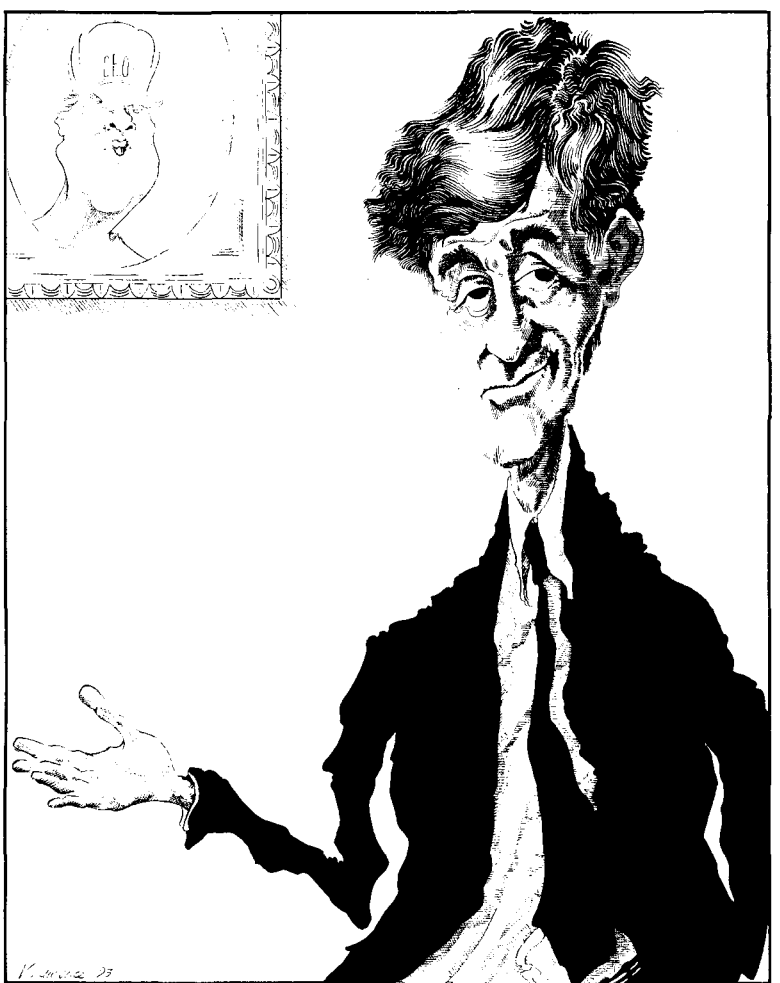
partners.) Rubin also served as an adviser to Clinton, visiting Little Rock in June and then helping him prepare for the fall debates with George Bush and Ross Perot.

After his victory, Clinton chose Rubin to head the NEC partly in order to reassure Wall Street, but also because he believed Rubin could create the kind of collegiality in the White House that prevailed at Goldman Sachs. "When he talked to me about the job," Rubin said, "he was very interested in how we did things at Goldman Sachs." On December 12 Clinton announced Rubin's appointment, along with those of Leon Panetta and Alice Rivlin. Rubin immediately moved into a suite at the Jefferson Hotel and began a creating a decision-making structure for Clinton's White House.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

As Clinton and Rubin conceived it, the council would coordinate policy between the departments and agencies. In the past, for instance, Treasury, Commerce, State, Defense and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative each had separate trade strategies. Now representatives from each would work through the NEC to develop a united policy. The council has functioned well. Rubin serves as Clinton's senior economic adviser—chairing senior staff meetings and conferring with the president privately for about fifteen minutes at least three times a week. (By contrast, national security adviser Anthony Lake is lucky to see Clinton once every two weeks.) During the budget battle, Rubin set up a "core group" that met regularly. It consisted of Rubin, his two chief deputies, Gene Sperling and Bowman "Bo" Cutter, Panetta, Rivlin, Bentsen, Altman, Laura Tyson and Alan Blinder from the Council of Economic Advisers and Labor Secretary Robert Reich. To handle other ongoing issues, Rubin established working groups chaired by NEC aides. Trade and NAFTA, for instance, have been handled by Cutter and Robert Kyle.

Like any bureaucratic process, the council has already produced winners and losers. It has given Tyson and Blinder far more voice than previous CEA officials. At the same time, Bentsen has less overall influence and Mickey Kantor practically none. Bentsen has been overshadowed not only by Rubin, but also by his two deputies, Altman and Undersecretary of the Treasury Lawrence Summers; and Kantor has been reduced to carrying out policies devised by the NEC working group. domestic policy aide Carol Rasco has rarely been heard from.

Rubin's influence over administration policy was most clearly felt during the budget debates. During the campaign, Clinton had promised to reduce the budget deficit and what he called the investment deficit: increasing spending on education and infrastructure by $200 billion over four years. He claimed he could do this by raising taxes on the wealthy and reducing military spending. Even before the election, Rubin was counseling Clinton to moderate his promises about public investment. Then, as the new, more pessimistic budget projections appeared in early January, Rubin argued for making deficit reduction the administration's priority. He was initially opposed by Reich, Tyson and others. One Cabinet official termed Rubin the leader of a deficit-cutting "gang of four" that included Panetta, Rivlin and Bentsen. But Rubin prevailed. Identifying his own position with what later became a consensus, Rubin said, "We knew that our threshold issue had to be the deficit, and that everything we had to do depended on getting a good deficit reduction program in place, and then consistent with that doing as much investment as possible."

The final budget bore the mark of Rubin's efforts. The administration held firm to its target of cutting the deficit—reducing the projected deficit from $239 billion in 1994 to $190 billion in 1997—but public spending was eviscerated. In real dollars, Bush's last budget increased spending on infrastructure, education and training by more than 8 percent; the Clinton budget will reduce it by nearly 1 percent.

Rubin developed the administration's economic

continued on page 28

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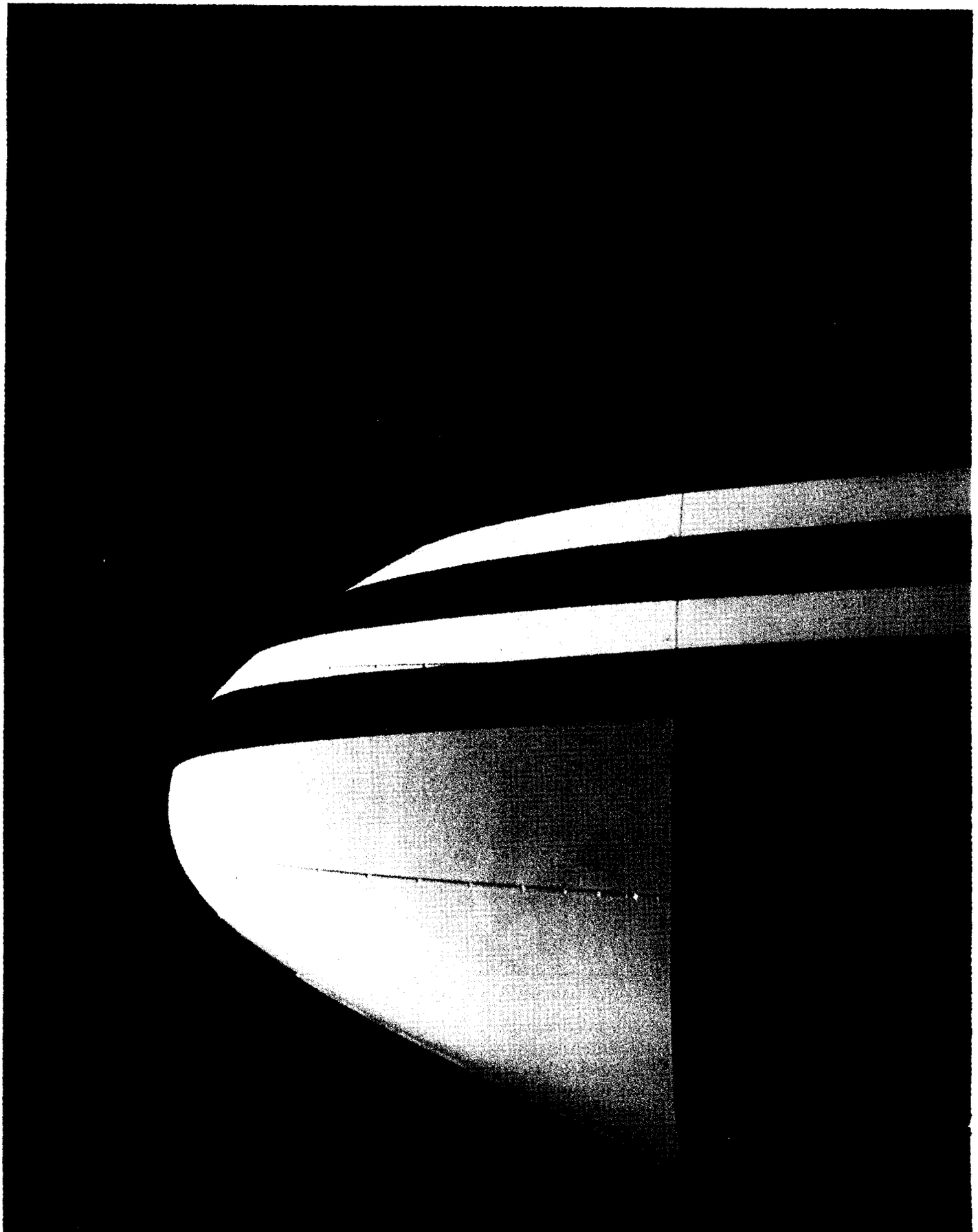

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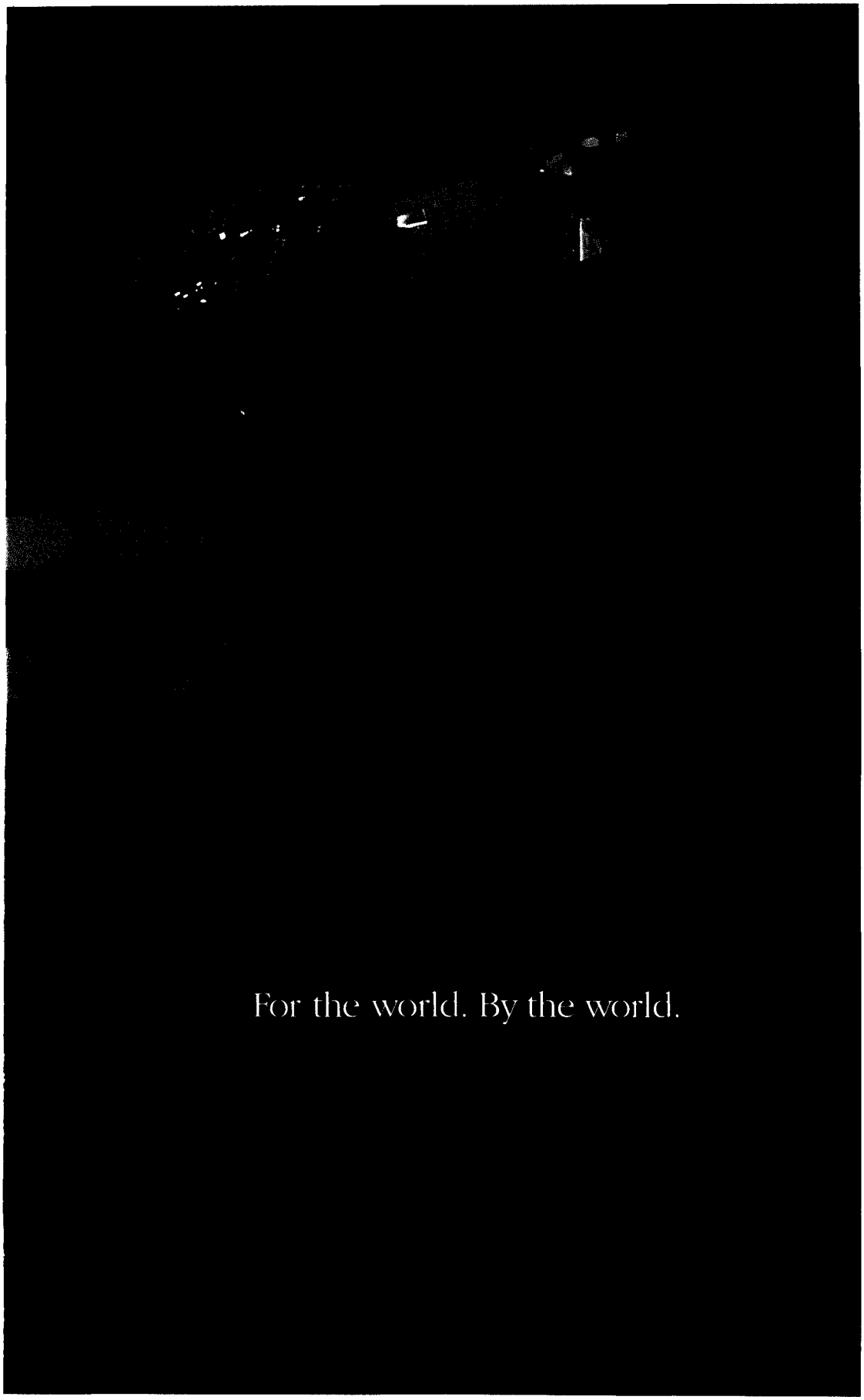

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rationale for deficit-cutting. He conceded that curbing the deficit could be contractionary, but contended that the loss of demand from tax hikes or spending cuts could be balanced by the reduction of interest rates brought about by the expectation of lower deficits. It would work this way: as Wall Street bond traders came to believe that the administration was sincere in its deficit-cutting, they would lose their fear that deficits would eventually spur inflation. They would bid long-term bond prices up and interest rates down, inspiring an investment surge within the economy. Budget contraction would lead to investment expansion.

Rubin backed up his argument with the presumed authority of his Wall Street experience. Recalled Tyson, "We at the CEA could say, 'Look if we go down this course of fiscal reduction, it might slow the economy down.' But he could say it could be offset if the bond markets respond positively. At that point, it was very important that he could say that based on his own experience it would work." Rubin won the argument. By the time the Senate passed the budget, Tyson, a stalwart Keynesian, was sounding Rubin's neoclassical themes. So was Clinton.

But Rubin and the NEC fared less well in their relations with Congress, botching the negotiations over the stimulus package and the BTU tax. Rubin also undermined the administration's political case for tax increases. Paul Begala and Clinton's other political advisers wanted the president to frame the tax increases as an attack on the undeserving rich. Begala reasoned that voters, still resentful of Clinton's abandoning his middle-class tax cut, would otherwise accept Republican arguments that the Clinton tax increases hit the middle class. But Rubin argued against singling out the rich for criticism. "I didn't think we should have demonizing rhetoric." Unfortunately, Begala's fears were later confirmed. Without a strong administration counterappeal, most Americans ignored the actual details of the tax increase and accepted the Republican argument that it was aimed at the middle as well as the upper classes.

Rubin now recognizes that the NEC has had a problem blending politics and policy. "I think I have learned how difficult it is to communicate in the public domain," he says. He has begun inviting White House political operatives to the core group, and his aides now talk of coordinating "message" and "substance." But the problem goes deeper than giving Begala and James Carville a seat at the table. Whether with Mondale in 1984 or Clinton this year, Rubin appears constitutionally averse to populist appeals. It's not just his Wall Street background; it is also his affinity for the cool and rational and his dislike of the hurly-burly emotionalism of radio talk shows. Yet success in American politics has pivoted on which politician and party can portray itself as the defender of working Americans and the enemy of idle wealth.

Rubin also might have gone too far in sacrificing Clinton's investment agenda at the deficit altar. At the president's urging, Rubin has begun to reconsider the reduction of public investment in the budget. But Rubin and Clinton may have already conceded too much. In Congress, they now face pressure from Democrats and Republicans who favor more budget cutting and from proponents of a balanced budget amendment—a proposal Rubin dismisses as a "terrible idea." As he oversees the preparation of next year's budget, Rubin is caught among conflicting priorities: maintaining the administration's deficit targets while raising spending on education and infrastructure and paying for a new national health plan. He also has to worry not only about how the administration's program is playing on Wall Street, but how it is received in middle America, resentful over Clinton's abandonment of the middle-class tax cut and his support for NAFTA. "It is starting to take its toll on me," Rubin acknowledged.

Rubin bears the scars of his first year in Washington. During last year's campaign, journalists were describing him as looking "boyish" and "much younger than his 53 years." Today, no one would now mistake him for an aging yuppie. His deeply set eyes are reddened; his pallor is ashen. With his lean, sharp-edged features, he looks like a tired, but kindly wolf. Rubin has worked seven-day weeks before. As an investment banker, he kept long hours and was sometimes under immense pressure, particularly when Robert Freeman's indictment threatened to cast Goldman Sachs into the inferno that had consumed other Wall Street firms. But Rubin says nothing compares to his first year in Washington. "The Freeman thing was excruciating, and large trading losses when we took them were always difficult to deal with," he explained. "But I had always been at Goldman Sachs. I was used to that. This is on an ongoing basis. A very big positive is that I've learned so much, but the other side of it is the additional stress creation because you are always dealing with things you haven't had experience with and have to get on top of them."

I asked Rubin if he could be getting burned out, but the phrase did not pass muster. "I don't know the answer to that," he says. "I wouldn't put it that way. I think the longer I am here, the more I know about the processes and the more I know about the substance, the more I think I can do. On the other hand, it is a preoccupying activity unlike anything I've ever done, and that is wearing. At some point, I have to establish a better balance for myself."

One person on Capitol Hill who knows Rubin thinks he is fading from power and will resign from fatigue. "Bob didn't understand that government was a twenty-four-hour-a-day experience," he says. "He didn't understand Clinton's work habits. I expect he won't be around past March of next year." Like any White House official, Rubin's star may dim, but it's unlikely that he will quit. He feels he has left one phase of his life behind and has begun another. "The chances of my going back to commercial life are practically zero," he says. Then, a faint smile courses his lips. "This," he says, casting a glance around his West Wing warren, "is my road not taken." •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

A New Spielberg; And Others

Steven Spielberg has made his own Holocaust museum. In **Schindler's List** (Universal), an adaptation by Steven Zaillian of Thomas Keneally's book, Spielberg has created a 184-minute account of the fate of Kraków's Jews under the German occupation, centered on the German businessman and bon vivant, Oskar Schindler, who devised a ruse to save 1,100 Jews from the Auschwitz ovens. A closing note tells us that in Poland today there are fewer than 4,000 Jews but in the world there are 6,000 "Schindler Jews," survivors and descendants.

For this film Spielberg has done the best directing of his career. Much of his previous work has been clever and some of it better than that, but *Schindler's List* is masterly. He has, with appropriate restraint, shot it in black and white (except for two closing sequences in color). Janusz Kaminski's superb cinematography uses shadows like prosody—*illuminates* with shadows. Michael Kahn has edited with intensity and line, never breathless, always fast. (One demurral: the intercutting between a Jewish wedding in a camp, a wild German officers' party and a German officer's boudoir romp is heavy.) John Williams has arranged a score, with Itzhak Perlman doing violin solos, that for the most part is quiet: Jewish melodies on woodwinds or a small children's chorus under scenes of inhumanity.

Liam Neeson plays—no, inhabits—Schindler with the authority of a round-voiced, juggernaut con man. Neeson bears himself like a Middle European, a comment I can't quite explain but that may be understood by many. He drives forward like a sensualist whose pleasures are food, drink, women and money. And Ben Kingsley—O rare Ben Kingsley!—is the Jewish accountant whom Schindler plucks from a condemned group to run his business and who combines gratitude with disdain, subservience with pride. (Actors who want to study the basis of acting—concentration—should watch Kingsley.)

Spielberg has not used one trite shot, one cheap tear-jerking assemblage. Tears are evoked, but honorably; his aim was to make a film that gripped us with authenticity. To this end he often uses newsreel angles and newsreel cutting. Yet he is not hand-held-camera nutty: where a panorama is needed—Jews in a long street assembling for deportation, Jews in a (seemingly) mile-wide file coming over a great field toward liberation—he understands how to present it and leave it alone. (Most of this picture was filmed in Poland.) Imagination, talent, commitment shine in every frame.

Now come two dreadful words: and yet. Is there a need for another film about the Holocaust? Especially after *Shoah*? Presumably there are at least some people who have never seen a Holocaust film and may see this one because it's by Spielberg and will have mainstream promotion. Let's hope there are many such.

But others may be aware of two bothersome connected points. Both of them demonstrate yet again how good work can be victimized by previous work, good or less good, on the same subject. First, the German commander, played by Ralph Fiennes, though based on fact, is by now something of a film cliché—smooth, cultivated, monstrous. Second, the film takes about two hours to reach the event that the title promises, Schindler's (not quite predictable) rescue operation. Everything up to then, vigorously done though it is, is—in two senses—terribly familiar.

Still, this film is a welcome astonishment from a director who has given us much boyish esprit, much ingenuity, but little seriousness. His stark, intelligent style here, perfectly controlled, suggests that this may be the start of a new period in Spielberg's prodigious career—Part Two: The Man.

Two films about a woman who plays the piano. The first, **The Piano** (Miramax), garlanded with Cannes Festival prizes, is an overwrought, hollowly symbolic glob of glutinous nonsense. The New Zealand writer-director Jane Campion, who made an appealing film of Janet Frame's autobiography *An Angel at My Table*, here reverts to the thick, self-conscious poeticizing of her first film, *Sweetie*.

In the mid-nineteenth century, a young Scotswoman, played by Holly Hunter, goes with her small (illegitimate) daughter to an arranged marriage in the New Zealand outback. The woman is mute; we're never told the cause, though she sometimes speaks to us on the sound track. She insists on taking her piano with

FILMS WORTH SEEING

It's All True. *Another remnant of Orson Welles's boisterous, gifted, unfulfilled life. A documentary about an unfinished documentary. Sad but essential viewing. (Reviewed 11/15/93)* **The Remains of the Day.** *Anthony Hopkins, the butler in a stately English home, is the Atlas who sustains this universe. Emma Thompson, the housekeeper, and James Ivory's succinct directing certainly help. More explicit than the novel, still it's exceptional. (12/6/93)* **A Streetcar Named Desire.** *Reissued with a bit of previously censored footage. Williams's masterpiece is bruised in screen adaptation, but Brando's performance remains titanic. (11/29/93)* **The War Room.** *Crackling documentary about the Clinton presidential campaign, "starring" James Carville and George Stephanopoulos. Disquietingly informative. (11/22/93)* **—SK**

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her, so even the dimmest among us can perceive that the piano is her symbolic voice.

Her "voice" is hellishly troublesome to bring ashore on the wild coast and to carry through the dense forest. Once established in her new home, Hunter doesn't respond to her husband, Sam Neill, though in time she does respond to her neighbor, Harvey Keitel (here he's a Scotsman with Maori tattooings—more symbolism). The story would be merely another wilderness triangle except for the illogic. When Neill discovers Hunter in bed with Keitel, he hides under the house to listen to them; later, however, he cuts off one of Hunter's fingertips when she merely tries to communicate with Keitel.

All this is ladled over with a rich gravy of tropical foliage, Maori simple wisdom and much assumption on the film's part of our utter sympathy for this quite peculiar woman. At the end she and Keitel leave together, and en route the piano is hurled into the sea. Wow. What a symbol—the piano on the ocean floor. Only a clod like me would ask what it's a symbol *of*—since, at the last, Hunter is still mute and is playing another piano, her injured finger tipped with metal.

Every moment is upholstered with the suffocating high-mindedness that declines to connect symbols with comprehensible themes. I haven't seen a sillier film about a woman and a piano since John Huston's *The Unforgiven* (1960), a Western in which Lillian Gish had her piano carried out into the front yard so she could play Mozart to pacify attacking Indians.

On the other hand, **The Accompanist** (Sony Pictures Classics) is an implicative little gem. It's set in wartime Paris under the Germans. Romane Bohringer plays a 20-year-old pianist who is engaged by a soprano, Elena Safonova, to accompany her in recitals in Paris and on tour. Richard Bohringer, father of Romane, plays Safonova's collaborationist-businessman husband. The accompanist and the soprano become good friends. The accompanist even becomes the singer's confidante about her Free French lover, Samuel Labarthe.

The triangle-with-observer is played out against a wartime background—in Paris and London—that makes it seem both petty (in the face of horrors) and important (the Germans are being fought so that people can still love and move as they choose). The ending is more unraveled than finished, but en route we get subtle performances from all, especially Romane Bohringer as she learns that one cannot live vicariously.

The direction is delicate, precise, reticent—done by Claude Miller, who adapted the screenplay with Luc Berard from a novel by Nina Berberova. Miller has relied a good deal on the secrets and discoveries in his actors' faces and, aided by Yves Angelo's sympathetic camera, he has found them.

And the music! Berlioz, Mozart, Schumann, Strauss, beautifully sung by Laurence Monteyrol and mimed by Safonova with perfect conviction. The singing gives the picture its raison d'être and also provides many minutes of bliss. •

Opera, politics and the French boom.

Of Kings and Divas

BY RICHARD TARUSKIN

I.

"The more an artwork succeeds as politics," the composer Ned Rorem has declared, "the more it fails as art." With less panache and many more words, Representative Henry Hyde agrees: "Good art is evocative rather than provocative," he has written, meaning that it is "neither art at the service of some political program nor art as an ideological instrument, but art as one means by which man gains a glimpse of the transcendent dimension of the human experience." Brute interventions of American politics into the affairs of art have brought frightened artists and canting politicians together in denial. There is, or there should be, no relationship between art and politics, they both assure us.

Yet both have abjured politics only to serve it. Hyde wished to justify censorship, in the form of the Helms Amendment that hobbled the National Endowment for the Arts, and Rorem wished to counter censorship. Their arguments

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were interchangeable, though their purposes were opposed—which shows that their arguments are not really arguments at all. Asked what his assertion could possibly mean, Rorem elaborated:

> Politics means propaganda, and propaganda means indoctrination, or the attempt to alter another's thinking. Propaganda is direct, while art is reflective; a speech by a leader, evil or benign, is surely more effective at inciting change (from lethargy to patriotism) than even the greatest—or indeed, the crassest—art.
>
> Art, insofar as it is art, does not change us; rather it shows us what we did not know we knew, intensifying our already held convictions. Music that does impel action tends to be not even music per se, but a hypnotic beat inciting us to battle. (Could I compose a piece that would make us march away from battle, I would devote my career to that and to hell with art!)

This clarifies nothing. It merely multiplies the arbitrary premises and the empty distinctions. Adding the precaution "insofar as it is art" to the definition of art as inherently nonpolitical only perfects the tautology, and passes some powerful ammunition to Senator Helms. Besides, the conceit that art cannot change us is contradicted by Rorem's own life: the experience of art changed him into an artist. Only by somebody's fiat (and let's hope he's out of office) can art and politics ever be so categorically dichotomized, because neither art nor politics is a single category. There are all kinds of art (even of "good" art), and there are all kinds of politics.

The politics that Rorem wishes to separate from art is affirmational or celebratory politics, the kind that totalitarian states require of their artist-citizens. The demand that artists assent to somebody else's politics deprives their art of the autonomy that artists in the postromantic tradition prize above all else. And it is oppositional politics that Hyde would exclude from the definition of art. It is not "some" political program that troubles him, but the "provocative" one, the one that threatens "family values" and is associated with the bêtes noires of the NEA such as Robert Mapplethorpe and Andre Serrano. It is not "an" ideological instrument that Hyde fears, but "the" ideological instrument, the leftist one, signaled on his side of the aisle by the very use of the word "ideological." (His own politics, naturally, "transcend" ideology.)

Would Hyde condemn Aaron Copland's *A Lincoln Portrait*, an artwork glorifying a fellow Illinoisan? He may even have performed the Carl Sandburg part himself, as so many politicians have done. Copland's piece is "evocative" of all the best American traditions, of values transcending the mere politics of the moment. Shall I remind Hyde that it was composed in 1942 in the spirit of the Popular Front, and in direct formal emulation of Soviet agitprop cantatas? (Rorem would need no reminder; as a card-carrying modernist he disapproves of affirmational art in principle, beginning with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, for him "the first piece of junk in the grand style.") Hyde's Republican forebears had not forgotten its origins, or its composer's past political associations,

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when they banned *A Lincoln Portrait* from President Eisenhower's inaugural exercises in 1953. But its comely politics of affirmation has survived the leftist taint, and it has been performed by now not only by Charlton Heston and Alan Simpson, but also by the Baroness Thatcher herself.

So it is never merely a question of politics. It is a question of what kind of politics: the politics of power or the politics of contention. Art can serve either one. Nor does the artist always have final say in the matter, for only under despotism (and not always then) is the meaning of a work of art a wholly vested meaning. In an open, mobile polity, art and its possible meanings, like all things public, are subject to endless appropriation and negotiation. To insist on seeking the political meaning of artworks solely in their makers' explicit designs is naïve or, more often, a dodge.

Doubtless Ned Rorem and Henry Hyde would each, for their differing reasons, have objected just as vociferously as did Samuel Lipman, the publisher of *The New Criterion*, to a remark made at a recent panel discussion by the producer Christopher Hunt. The topic was "Opera as a Vehicle for Social Commentary or Activism in Today's Society," and (as quoted by Lipman) Hunt said, "All art is political: art either seeks change or is a propagandist for the status quo." Lipman found this laughable and pernicious. Indeed, the formulation is crude. Yet in rebutting it, in arguing at length against the notion of art as politics, Lipman let slip a Hydeish aside that placed him where we knew he was all along, and exquisitely confirmed Hunt's point. "It seems to me," he said, "that the preponderance of great art has in fact reinforced and passed on, rather than challenged and destroyed, the prevailing values of society." Such a statement, offered as evidence of art's nonpolitical nature, is a masterpiece of incoherence. But it is typical of the level of the debate.

II.

Until the age of Beethoven—or more accurately, the age of Kant, who invented the "transcendent dimension" that Hyde extols—the idea of political art made nobody squeamish. High art was produced for, and served the interests of, social and political elites; that was what made it "high." When, during the Renaissance, artists came to be employed in large numbers to serve the interests of secular authorities, political art in a form approaching the modern idea of it came into being. The political art par excellence was opera, and so it has remained.

Opera was invented at the end of the sixteenth century by a group of Florentine noblemen. All the earliest *favole in musica*, or "musical tales," were fashioned to adorn northern Italian court festivities, flattering the assemblages of "renowned heroes, blood royal of kings" who were privileged to hear them, potentates "of whom Fame tells glorious deeds though falling short of truth," as La Musica herself puts it in the prologue to Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, which was first performed during the carnival season of 1607 to fete Francesco Gonzaga, the prince of Mantua. The words were written by the prince's secretary, Alessandro Striggio.

The neoclassical impulse that gave

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birth to opera, usually described (following the conventions of romantic historiography) in "poietic" terms—in terms, that is, of the artist-maker's expressive aspirations—had also an "esthesic" side, reflecting the expectations of the audience. The revived musical drama reflected, and was meant to reflect, the glory and the grandeur of antiquity on the princes who were its patrons. In a still unsurpassed essay titled "The Sociology of Baroque Music" written in 1947 by Manfred Bukofzer, the tragically short-lived Panofsky of musicology, early opera is characterized as the quintessential temporal expression of the twin triumphs of absolutism and mercantilism, an expression that brought to its pinnacle the exploitation of the arts "as a means of representing power." It was precisely this exploitation that, in Bukofzer's view, brought about the stylistic metamorphosis from "Renaissance" to "Baroque."

Bukofzer was as unflinching as any contemporary New Historicist about the social costs of this magnificent artistic efflorescence:

> Display of splendor was one of the main social functions of music for the Counter-Reformation and the baroque courts, made possible only through money; and the more money spent, the more powerful was the representation. Consistent with the mercantile ideas of wealth the sumptuousness in the arts became actually an end in itself.... However, viewed from the social angle the shining lights of the flowering arts cast the blackest shadows. Hand in hand with the brilliant development of court and church music went the Inquisition and the ruthless exploitation of the lower classes by means of oppressive taxes.

With the spread of opera from the opulent courts of Italy to the petty courts of northern Europe, the costs became ever more exorbitant and the bankrolling methods ever more drastic. "The Duke of Brunswick, for one, relied not only on the most ingenious forms of direct and indirect taxation but resorted even to the slave trade," Bukofzer reports. "He financed his operatic amusements by selling his subjects as soldiers so that his flourishing opera depended literally on the blood of the lower classes."

The court spectacles thus bought and thus paid for apotheosized political power in at least three ways. The first and most spectacular was the fusion of all the arts in the common enterprise of princely aggrandizement. The monster assemblages of singers and instrumentalists (the former neoclassically deployed in dancing choruses, the latter massed in the first true orchestras) were matched, and even exceeded, by the luxuriously

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elaborate stage sets and theatrical machinery. Second, the plots, involving mythological or ancient historical heroes caught up in stereotyped conflicts of love and honor, were self-evident allegories of the sponsoring rulers, who were addressed directly in the obligatory prologues that linked the story of the opera to the events of their reign.

Third, and possibly most revealing, severe limits were set on the virtuosity of soloists lest, by indecorously representing their own power, they upstage the personages portrayed, or worse, the personages allegorically magnified. The ban on virtuosity reflected an aristocratic prejudice as old as Aristotle. It found its most influential Renaissance expression in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528), in which noble amateurs are enjoined to affect "a certain negligence" in singing (it was called *sprezzatura*), lest they compromise their standing as "free men" by an infusion of servile professionalism.

But virtuosity found a home in commercial opera, which came into being—inevitably, it now seems—in Venice, Europe's great meeting place and merchant center, when the Teatro S. Cassiano opened its doors to the public in the carnival season of 1637. "There and then," in the words of Ellen Rosand, the early Venetian opera's leading historian, "opera as we know it assumed its definitive identity—as a mixed theatrical spectacle available to a socially diversified, and paying audience: a public art." Where the court opera now seems a fossil—ceremonially exhumed and exhibited to sober praise from time to time, but undeniably dead—the early commercial opera bequeathed to us the conventions by which opera has lived, in glory and in infamy, into our own time. As Rosand observes, modern operagoers can still recognize in seventeenth-century Venetian works "the roots of favorite scenes: Cherubino's song, Tatiana's letter, Lucia's mad scene, Ulrica's invocation, even Tristan and Iseult's love duet."

Not by accident, Rosand names four puissant females, one fairly neutered masculine partner and a delectable cross-dresser. Ever since opera opened its doors to a public that had to be lured, it has been a prima donna circus with a lively transsexual sideshow. Uncanny, nature-defying vocalism easily compensated for the courtly accoutrements—the sumptuous sets, the intricate choruses and ballets, the rich orchestras—that the early commercial opera theaters could not afford. Never mind the lofty union of the arts. What Fyodor Chaliapin later called "educated screaming" is the only bait that public opera has ever really needed, and its attraction has never waned.

Courtesy The Bettmann Archive

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY

The greatest screamers of all, and the most completely "educated" (that is, cultivated) ones, were the male prima donnas known as castratos, opera's first international stars, whose astounding sonority and preternaturally florid style confirmed opera in its abiding aura of the eerie. Although castratos originated not in the theater but in the churches of sixteenth-century Italy, where females could not perform but a full range of singers was desired, and where (as John Roselli puts it in the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*) "choirboys were no sooner trained than lost," the burgeoning commercial opera stage with its exhibitionism and its heroics gave these unearthly singers their true arena. In an age that valued symbolic artifice, these magnificent singing objects—artists made, not born—were "naturally" the gods, the generals, the athletes and the lovers. Eighteenth-century "serious opera" is unthinkable (and unrevivable) without them.

By the eighteenth century, however, the serious—the noble and the heroic—was only one of the available operatic styles. As Rosand points out, commercial opera was from the first a bastard genre, in which crowd-pleasing comic characters and burlesque scenes or interludes compromised lofty classical or historical themes in violation of traditional dramatic rules, before being segregated (by snobbish dramatic purists) into discrete categories. Here was the other great difference between court opera and commercial opera: the latter, at first under cover of comedy, introduced oppositional politics into the genre. The commercial (later the comic) opera was a hotbed of "carnivalism," that is, of authority stood on its head.

It was already a license to display operatic divas, veritable warbling courtesans, to the public gaze, and a notorious Jesuit critic lost no time in rising to the bait, denouncing the theaters of the "*mercenarii musici*" as voluptuous and corrupting in contrast to the edifying spectacles mounted "*ne' palazzi de' principi grandi.*" But the most significant licenses were as much political as moral, and marked the public opera indelibly. Opera became a world where satyrs romped and Eros reigned, where servant girls chastised their masters, where philandering counts were humiliated and where, later and more earnestly, rabbles were roused and revolution was abetted. In post-Napoleonic Europe, especially after 1830, when Auber's *La muette de Portici* sparked the riot that led to Belgian independence, opera was for the best of reasons the most stringently watch-

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dogged and censored of all forms of art.

Examples of opera's disruptive and destabilizing vectors can be drawn from virtually all stages of its history. In the beginning, Monteverdi's two most famous operas, sole survivors in the twentieth-century repertory of the court and market genres of seventeenth-century Italy, epitomized the two extremes. *L'Orfeo*, his first opera, with its splendid orchestra, its revised mythology (no rioting Bacchantes at the end, just serene apotheosis), its focus on natural male vocal ranges and (in Orpheus's appeal to Charon) its pointed clash between virtuosity and eloquence, was the quintessential princely spectacle. It contains no real love music. Orpheus sings on and on about his love for Eurydice, but he does not express it directly through music—that is, to her. (Indeed, as the feminist critic Susan McClary has finally pointed out, Eurydice is hardly a character in the opera at all.)

L'Incoronazione di Poppea, Monteverdi's last opera, written for Venice in 1642, has two superbly developed prima donna roles (the more virtuosic of them the fork-tongued, string-pulling title character), two parts for shrill castrato singers (the higher of them the feminized, manipulated Emperor Nero) and a quartet of low-born comic characters—one of them, a ghastly crone played in drag, now the very emblem of the type—who spoof the passions and the gestures of their betters. The culminating number (not by Monteverdi, it is now agreed, but what of that?) is an arching, bristlingly sensual lust duet for two sopranos, impossible to savor today at full outlandish strength (for Nero is generally sung now, transposed, by a "natural" man). This duet symbolizes and formally celebrates, in the guise of a *ciaccona*, a slow dance over a mesmerizing ground bass, a craving that has subverted all moral and political codes. Where *Orfeo*, the court pageant, celebrates established order and authority and the cool moderation its hero tragically violates, *Poppea*, the carnival show, brings it all down: passion wins out over reason, woman over man, guile over truth, impulse over wisdom, license over law, artifice (in persuasion, in the singing of it, in the voice itself) over nature.

Consider also a later example. *Guillaume Tell*, Rossini's last opera, produced in 1829, was generally sung during its composer's ample remaining lifetime, which was the time of the post-Metternich reaction, to an imposed alternate libretto that replaced Schiller's dangerous freedom-loving protagonist with Andreas Hofer, the leader of the loyal

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Tyrolean resistance to Napoleon. Despite his devotion to the Austrian crown, however, even this character was considered a ticklish prospect in Russia, and the events depicted too recent; and so a second ersatz, *Charles the Bold*, that transferred the action back to the seemingly innocuous fifteenth century, had to be concocted by an official of the Russian Imperial Theaters. It was then translated for the use of the tsar's personally subsidized Italian opera troupe, who presented it as *Carlo il Temerario*.

Still, despite all precautions, as many a wry memoir attests, Rossini's opera—and the Italian opera generally, brought to Russia as a representation of the tsar's power and as an instrument of his diplomacy—became a rallying point for anti-tsarist politics. "Ovations were especially strong when they gave some slight pretext for hints of what then passed for a liberal drift," wrote one old theater hand. The great tenor Tamberlik "would be forced to repeat the phrase 'Cercar la libertà!' in *Guillaume Tell* three and even five times." As long as the radical students of the 1850s and 1860s could congregate in the passages and the uppermost gallery of St. Petersburg's old Bolshoi Theater and, standing in what Prince Peter Kropotkin, the famous anarchist, called "a Turkish bath atmosphere," roar their approval of Tamberlik's high C-sharp, they could enjoy a sense of solidarity that was denied them in any other sphere of Russian public life. Nowhere but at the state-supported Italian opera, in short, did Russian radicals enjoy the right of assembly.

Thus opera has always, and in superbly overdetermined fashion, succeeded as politics. Only since the onset of "transcendent" neo-romantic apathy toward the world and its predicaments, moreover, has opera begun to fail as art. In every way that counts, opera as we know it (or used to know it) is the carnivalized spectacle that was born in Venice in 1637, not the uplifting performance that was born in Florence in 1600. Every one of opera's periodic neoclassical "reforms," from the Metastasian to the Gluckian to the Wagnerian, has been an effort to recover prelapsarian, pre-commercial, pre-Venetian values, which meant recovering a politics of affirmation under the protection of a court, "Holy Roman," French or Bavarian. To the extent that these reforms have "succeeded," it has been because they have been successfully co-opted and subverted by the singers and the audiences whom the reformers despised.

Yet as the Italian scholar Lorenzo Bianconi, among others, has forcefully complained, it is the court opera that has been privileged in the historiography of the genre (and, I would add, in snob criticism as well). In consequence, opera's defining attributes have been made to look like deviations. (Even Rosand, within the seventeenth century, as it were, speaks of "decadence" and "perversion of original values," and associates the fall from grace with the rise of the prima donna.) That is why opera's repertory, that is, what is actually performed and applauded, has always overlapped so little with its canon, that is, what is ritually praised and professionally studied.

The "canonical" viewpoint on opera, an amalgam of neo-Wagnerianism and New Criticism, is most adamantly asserted (or, perhaps one ought to say by now, defended) in Joseph Kerman's classic *Opera as Drama*, now nearing forty years of age but still very much alive in a new edition. Its purview resolutely excludes performers and the public, except to disparage them. There is no room in Kerman's idealized conception of opera for anything more than the composer and the text. It is thus a wholly literary, or rather literaturized, conception of the form. The dramatic values that it endorses are imported from literary prototypes.

So, of course, were those of the court opera, and Kerman is as intransigent an upholder of moralizing, plain-sung court opera aesthetics—and as much a deplorer of the subversive, sexy, anti-literary politics of voice—as Wagner, Gluck or even old Giulio Caccini, the inventor of recitative. The early loss of properly dramatic value in opera coincides, for Kerman, with the early rise of commercial opera, and, with it, of anti-classicizing performance values as determinants not only of success but of creative procedure. It is worth noting, in the light of Kerman's New Critical bias, that even the earliest court operas were always published, as souvenirs, in fully edited, idealized texts that resembled books. Commercial operas, by contrast, were not published until comparatively recent times, but existed during their runs and revivals in a ceaseless maelstrom of negotiation and revision, never attaining the status of finished texts.

What such a fluid situation violates, of course, is the ideal of "poietics," of sovereign artistic control. Kerman solemnizes his tiny canon of exemplary operas—three by Mozart, and one each by Monteverdi, Verdi, Wagner, Debussy, Berg and Stravinsky—with a quote from (who else?) T. S. Eliot: "It is a function of all art to give us some perception of an order in life, by imposing an order upon it." But this is a political program—specifically, it is the time-honored program of aristocratic affirmational politics. By appropriating it, Kerman reassures us that whatever the mischances on the surface of a *Wozzeck*, whatever the injustices on the surface of a *Figaro*, there is a force in the world that makes everything harmonious and whole: *Io la Musica son*, in the words Monteverdi's muse sang to the courtiers of Mantua in 1607, before opera went astray, "Music am I, who with sweet melody know how to calm every troubled heart." The Prospero who can summon forth this goddess and wield her healing force is the composing mastermind (Kerman's very word) who commands the show. In a post-absolutist world, a world that has renounced the absolute political power that art used to affirm, the politics of affirmation now worships the artist—in proportion, of course, to the absoluteness (the "transcendence") of his achievement.

But not all art does what an Eliot or a Rorem or a Hyde says art does, unless that is how you choose, in exclusionary tautology, to define art. Not much opera does it, as Kerman is the first to agree. (With such a working definition, it is no wonder that his book is slim.) A different, far more generous critical perspective on opera now seems gradually to be gaining the upper hand, just as, with Bianconi and some others, a new historiography of the genre is taking shape. It rejects the utopian *promesse du bonheur*, the promise of a perfect poietic wholeness, and centers on esthesis, on performance and reception as the locus of operatic value. Three recent books—*Unsung Voices* by Carolyn Abbate, *The Angel's Cry* by Michel Poizat and *The Queen's Throat* by Wayne Koestenbaum—collectively sum it up. *Voice, cry, throat*: that is where opera lives. The best we can expect from the art, say these authors (a musicologist, a psychoanalyst and a poet), and it is more than enough, are moments of extravagant (and, yes, often regressive) bliss to comfort us in a world of forlorn desire. The bringer of this *jouissance* is not the mastermind but the vibrant body, immediate minister to our ills, that stands literally or metaphorically before us with throat aquiver, radiating uncanny din.

Diva worship is certainly nothing new, and a lot of frankly anti-intellectual fan-mag palaver makes similar claims. What is new is the seriousness with which the diva's (or "voice-object's") cause is now advanced—important to note because Kerman had staked exclusive rights to "the serious position" on opera—and the way in which the new strain of sophisticated opera critics has opened up formerly unrespectable and even unmen-

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tionable aspects of the genre. The breach between the New and the newer criticism of opera, however, is just the latest battleground in the war that has been going on since the first century of operatic history. Ever since 1637 the two political strains—authoritarian and anarchic, affirmational and oppositional—have unpeacefully coexisted in opera, conditioning everything about it: its forms, its styles, its meanings (or its attempts to circumvent meaning), its performance practices, its followings, its critical traditions. The same political tension lies behind every one of the press skirmishes and *querelles* that dot operatic history, and it informs the intermission disputes of today. Nothing else attests so well to opera's cultural importance, and nothing else so well explains the durability of this oldest of living musical art forms in the West.

III.

The fiercest *querelles* of all took place in France, the giant among seventeenth-century European autocracies, where opera had to succeed as politics before it had any chance of succeeding as art. Like their English counterparts, who also possessed a glorious tradition of spoken theater (as the Italians did not), the aristocrats of seventeenth-century France saw only a child's babble in *dramma per musica*. To their minds, the art of music and the art of drama simply would not mix. "Would you know what an Opera is?" wrote Saint-Evremond, an exiled French courtier and a famous wit, to the Duke of Buckingham. "I'll tell you that it is an odd medley of poetry and music, wherein the poet and musician, equally confined one by the other, take a world of pains to compose a wretched performance."

Music in the theater, for the thinking French as for the thinking English, was at best an elegant bauble, more likely a nuisance. High tragedians spurned it. Corneille would admit music only into a *pièce à machines*, a play that already adulterated the seriousness of the drama for the sake of spectacle in the form of flying machines on which gods descended or winged chariots took off. And even then, he wrote in 1650 in the preface to *Andromède*, "I have been very careful to have nothing sung that is essential to the understanding of the play, since words that are sung are usually understood poorly by the audience." But then artists and critics who value understanding have always been hostile to what Samuel Johnson liked to call "an exotic and irrational Entertainment." Music has never been reason's ally.

The irrational, though, has its rational uses, and nobody knew that better than Jules Mazarin, the seventeenth century's most artful politician. It was Cardinal Mazarin, né Giulio Mazzarini, the Italian-born de facto regent of France, who took the first steps, in the earliest years of the boy-king Louis XIV's reign, to establish opera in his adopted country. By recruiting the services of Luigi Rossi, the leading composer of Rome, whose *Orfeo* of 1647 was the first opera expressly composed for the French court, Mazarin secured for himself a prestige that rivaled that of his own mentor, Cardinal Antonio Barberini, who had been Rossi's patron. The Italian spectacles, full of everything *merveilleux*, bedizened the French court more gloriously than any rationalistic drama could do, for "the purpose of such spectacles," wrote the moralist La Bruyère, a latter-day convert, "is to hold the mind, the eye and the ear equally enthralled."

And there was something else as well. Rossi, in his turn, recruited for his performances a troupe of Roman singers and instrumentalists, a little colony of Italians in the French capital who were personally loyal to Mazarin, and who, in the time-honored fashion of traveling virtuosi, could serve him as secret agents and spies in his diplomatic maneuvers with the papal court. All of this was a lesson to Mazarin's apprentice, the king,

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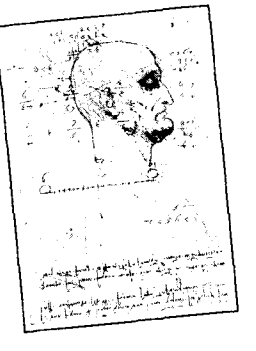

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who thus received instruction, as the historian Madeleine Laurain-Portemer has put it, in "the political importance of *le mécénat*." The foundations were laid for what the French still call their *grand siècle*, and opera was destined to be its grandest manifestation.

Yet it was a very special sort of opera that would reign in France, one tailored to accommodate national prejudices, court traditions and royal prerogatives. As the French court was the exemplary aristocratic establishment, so the French national opera was the courtiest court opera that ever was—and hence the one most committed to the politics of affirmation. Like every other aspect of French administrative culture, it was wholly centralized. Its primary purpose was to furnish "propaganda for the state and for the divine right of the king," as Neal Zaslaw has written, and only secondarily to provide "entertainment for the nobility and bourgeoisie." Indeed, no operatic spectacle could be shown in public that had not been prescreened, and approved, at court. At the same time, French opera aimed far higher than the "musical tale" of the Italians, which was essentially a pastoral play. The French form aspired to the status of a full-fledged *tragédie en musique*, later *tragédie lyrique*, which meant that the values of the spoken drama, France's greatest cultural treasure, were as far as possible to be preserved in spite of the music.

To reconcile the claims of court pageantry with those of dramatic gravity was no mean trick. Only a very special genius could bring it off. At the time of Luigi Rossi's momentous sojourn in France, another far less distinguished Italian musician—an apprentice, really—was already living there: Giovanni Battista Lulli, a Florentine boy who had been brought over in 1646, at the age of 13, to serve as *garçon de chambre* to Madame de Montpensier, a Parisian lady who wanted to practice her Italian. She also supported his training in courtly dancing and violin playing. When his patroness, a Frondist, was exiled in 1652, Lulli secured release from her employ and found work as a dancer and a mime at the royal court, where he danced alongside, and made friends with, the teenaged king. Upon the death of his violin teacher the next year, Lulli assumed his position as court composer of instrumental music.

His rise to supreme power was steady and unstoppable, for Lulli was a veritable musical Mazarin, an Italian-born French political manipulator of genius. With the founding in 1669 of the Académie Royale de Musique, Louis XIV's opera establishment (which the king shortly deeded over to his by then-naturalized friend who, like Mazarin, had Frenchified his name), Jean-Baptiste Lully became himself a musical Sun King, the absolute autocrat of French music, which he re-created in his own image. He died in 1687 (with his boots on, as it were, following a mishap with a time-beating cane), having produced thirteen *tragédies lyriques*. The pattern that he set with them became the standard to which any composer aspiring to a court performance had to conform. Two generations of French musicians thus became Lully's dynastic heirs. His works would dominate the repertory for half a century after his death, in response not to market forces or to public demand, but by royal decree, giving Lully a vicarious reign comparable in length of years to his patron's, and extending through most of the reign of the next king, Louis XV. His style did not merely define an art form, it defined a national identity. *La musique*, he might have said, *c'est moi*.

The ultimate "representation of power," the Lullian *tragédie lyrique* was from first to last a sumptuously outfitted—but, in another sense, quite thinly clad—metaphor for the grandeur and the authority of the court that it adorned. The monumental mythological or heroic-historical plots, some at first chosen by the king himself, celebrated the implacable universal order and the supremacy of divine or divinely appointed rulers. Themes of sacrifice and self-sacrifice—Alcestis, Idomeneus, even the biblical Jephthe—predominated.

A metaphor from first to last. First, following a marchlike overture whose stilted rhythms became a universal code for pomp, there had to be a panegyric prologue of a full act's duration. Here mythological beings were summoned to extol the French king's magnificent person and his deeds of war and peace with choral pageantry and with suites of dances modeled on the actual *ballet de cour*, an elaborate ritual, in which the king himself took part, that symbolized the social hierarchy. At times the mythological characters could be joshed a little, as in Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*, where Louis XV's successful prosecution of the War of Polish Succession is symbolized textually by an amorous concord of Venus and Mars and musically by a delightfully incongruous love duet of flute and trumpet that only Rameau, a master of the grotesque, could have brought off; or as in Michel Pignolet de Montéclair's *Jephté*, where Roman deities scurry out of the way of the Holy Scripture. Such levity was tolerable in a prologue, for it only enhanced the exaltation of the king above his mythological admirers.

Throughout the spectacle that followed, dancing, ceremonial movement accompanied by the grandest and most disciplined orchestra in Europe, would furnish a lavish symbolic counterpoint to the words, at times enlarging upon the dramatic action, at times contrasting with it, as when Jupiter, in the second act of *Castor et Pollux*, orders up a lengthy Arcadian divertissement just to show his errant son what he will have to give up if he goes through with his planned self-sacrifice. Everything reached culmination in a monumental *chaconne* or *passacaille*, a stately choral dance over a ground bass that could go on for literally hundreds of measures, enlisting all the dramatis personae for the purpose of announcing an explicit moral. "C'est la valeur qui fait les Dieux / Et la beauté fait les Déesses!" is the one enunciated in *Castor et Pollux*. And the metaphorical significance of the final dance is spelled out with special clarity in that opera. "C'est la fête de l'univers!" Jupiter declares, and his words are taken up as a refrain by the ensemble, representing all the planets and the stars in the sky in an orgy of temporal panegyric.

The contemporary relevance of the allegory, proclaimed at the first and affirmed at the last, was what really counted in a *tragédie lyrique*. To drive it home the players wore "modern dress," adapted from contemporary court regalia, just as the dances they danced were the sarabands, the gavottes and the *passepieds* of the contemporary ballroom. The theatrical pageant was not merely reminiscent of a social dance, it *was* a social dance enacted by professional proxies. The whole drama was conceived as a sublimated court ritual. Royal and noble spectators were looking not for transcendence, but for validation. They did not value the kind of verisimilitude that makes the imaginary seem real. They wanted just the opposite: to see the real—that is, themselves—projected into the fabulous and the archetypal.

Along with this peerless feast of symbolic movement and rich sonority went an unparalleled courtly intolerance of virtuoso singing, abjured not only for the usual negative reasons—uppity singers symbolized a polity in disarray—but for more positive reasons having to do with the theatrical traditions of France. Here verisimilitude of a very particular sort—fidelity to articulate language, which is the first thing that goes in florid, legato, "operatic" singing—suddenly loomed

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very large. The lead performers in French court opera remained nominally *acteurs*, and the voice of the castrato went unheard in the land even when (in Lully's *Atys*) the plot actually hinged on castration. (But of course the castrato voice was anything but self-referential; the one thing it never symbolized was eunuchhood.)

Rarely were French singing actors called upon to contend with the full orchestra. Their interminable scenes and confrontations were played against a bare-figured bass in a stately, richly nuanced recitative whose supple rhythms in mixed meters caught the lofty cadence of French theatrical declamation. Lully, for whom French was a second language, was said to have modeled this style directly on the closely observed delivery—the contours, the tempos, the rhythms and the inflections—of La Champmeslé, Racine's handpicked tragedienne. There were no roulades and no cadenzas, but there were an infinity of "graces": tiny conventional embellishments—shakes, slides, swells—that worked in harness with the bass harmony to punctuate the lines and to enhance their rhetorical projection. And there were all kinds of subtly graded transitions in and out of minuscule, simply-structured "airs," set in plain couplets to dance rhythms, that animated the prosody while placing minimum barriers in the way of understanding.

This, in its way, was the perfect opera for opera haters: an eyeful of spectacle, one ear full of opulent instrumental timbre, the other ear full of high rhetorical declamation. Vocal melody was far from the first ingredient or the most potent one, and the singers were held forcibly in check. Vocal virtuosity was admitted only in a decorative capacity on a par with orchestral color and stage machinery—never as a metaphor of emotion run amok!—and had to emanate from the lips of anonymous coryphées: members of the populace, shades, athletes, planets. The dazzling general impression took absolute precedence over the particular participants. The concert of myriad forces in perfect harness under the aegis of a mastermind was the real message, whatever the story. While even Saint-Evremond had to admit that "no man can perform better than Lully upon an ill-conceived subject," he turned it into a barb: "I don't question but that in operas at the Palace-Royal, Lully is 100 times more thought of than Theseus or Cadmus," his heroes. But that was all right, since the king was even more thought of than Lully.

When the style of Lully—Mr. Music, "Monsieur Ut-mi-ut-sol," as the encyclo-

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pedist Diderot called him—was finally challenged in the 1730s (and not without a major press war), it was only by an intensified version of itself created by Jean-Philippe Rameau ("Monsieur Utremifasollasiutututut"): richer in harmony, more sumptuous in sonority, more laden in texture, more heroic in rhythm and rhetoric, more impressively masterminded than ever. When André Campra said of the 60-year-old Rameau's maiden opera that it contained enough music for ten operas, he did not mean it as a compliment. That same opera, *Hyppolite et Aricie,* was the very first musical work to which the adjective "baroque" was attached, and it was no compliment either. (The career of "baroque," originally a pejorative denoting irregular shape and connoting unnaturalness, as a neutral period label for music does not extend even as far back as the beginning of this century; the French still avoid it, preferring to call their ancien régime repertoire *la musique classique française.*)

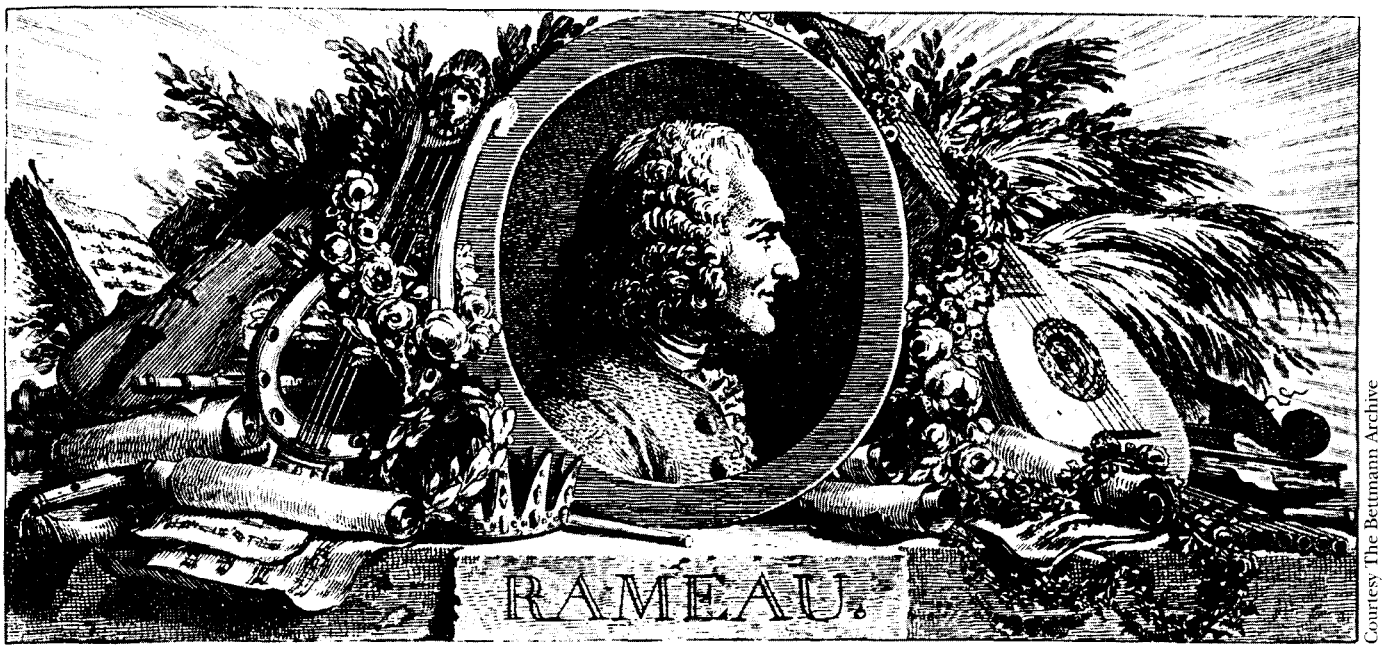
Rameau's prodigality of invention was taken as a hubris, a representation of personal power and therefore a *lèse-majesté,* offensive not only to the memory of the great founder, whose works were the first true "classics" in the history of music, sacramentally perpetuated in repertory, but also to what the founder's style had memorialized. Indeed, if one turns from Lully's dulcet *Atys* of 1676—Louis XIV's favorite, famous for its erotic *sommeil* or "dream symphony"—to Rameau's pungent, even violent *Castor et Pollux* of 1737, one can experience a bit of a shock. Until, that is, one reckons that the span of time separating these two works is greater than the span that separates Bach's *B-Minor Mass* from Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, or Verdi's *Il Trovatore* from Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring;* and the shock of the new gives way to amazement at the hold of tradition, a hold that testifies first of all to the potency of administrative centralism and absolute political authority.

The real challenge came fifteen years later, with the "War of the Buffoons," in which the French court opera at last confronted the Italian commercial opera head on, and received, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "a blow from which it never recovered." Rousseau was a dilettante composer, and he had an interest in seeing the grand machinery of the official French style, with which he could never hope to cope, replaced by the sketchy "natural" spontaneity of the Italians. (He rode the coattails of the Italians in Paris to some popular success with his own little rustic *intermède* called *Le Devin du village,* or *The Village Soothsayer.*) But Rousseau was much more than a musician, and his intense interest in the affair suggests that much more than music was at stake. Historians now agree that what seems a ludicrously inflated press scuffle about opera was in fact a coded episode, and an important one, in the ongoing battle between absolutism and enlightenment. As always, the Italian commercial opera—epitomized this time in Pergolesi's farce *La Serva Padrona,* in which a plucky maidservant cows and dominates her master, subverting the social hierarchy it was the business of the French opera to affirm—exemplified and stimulated the politics of opposition.

IV.

I choose *Atys* and *Castor et Pollux* to exemplify the idiom of the old regime at its Lullian and Ramellian poles, because we can actually hear these two operas side by side, along with most of the other operas discussed above, thanks to William Christie, an amazing American musician residing in Paris, and thanks to Les Arts Florissants, his ensemble. Over the last ten years, Christie and his musicians have been resurrecting a corpus of French court operas, in theaters and in recordings. Their performances are as nearly perfect as can be imagined.

But no, one cannot imagine these performances until one has heard them, so different are they from any previous attempt to perform these exacting works within living earshot, and so much more convincing. The Arts Florissants style is altogether foreign to what anybody would recognize today as normal operatic technique, which has been formed, since the seventeenth century, on the repertory toward which the French opera was adversarial. To persuade today's audiences of the viability of this repertory, the French aristocratic manner had to be invented afresh. The integrity and the cogency with which Christie and his troupe have accomplished the reconstruction is something of a miracle, perhaps the finest achievement that the "early music" movement can claim. These performers, like most in their field, also make the higher, obviously unwarrantable claim of restoration. As far as I am concerned, they are entitled to it. They are in fact the only "early



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music" performers today to whom I would willingly grant the freedom of the term. But I grant it only on condition that all its meanings be comprehended.

Because it is so literary, so bound by written and unwritten conventions, and therefore so specialized, the French manner has always been the "difficult" baroque style, the one in which it is hardest to achieve fluency. This was as true then as it is now. Handel's eighteenth-century biographer, Mainwaring, relates how Arcangelo Corelli, the great Italian violinist, politely handed some music back to the "dear Saxon" because it was "in the French style, which I do not understand." No music depends more utterly for its successful performance on the possession of *école.*

The only place on earth where one can acquire this schooling now is in William Christie's class at the Paris Conservatoire, he being the first American ever hired by that snooty institution. Just like Lully himself, another favored immigrant, Christie has been officially charged with teaching the French to be French. But where did Christie learn how? Right from the sources, early music practitioners like to say, and in the case of the French court opera there may even be some truth in the claim. Precisely because it was a centralized, bureaucratic institution, Lully's Académie generated a huge quantity of prosaic documentation in the form of payment records, personnel lists and production books. When Les Arts Florissants do Lully, their orchestra and chorus have precisely the size and the makeup of Lully's orchestra; when they do Rameau, the cyclopean band is Rameau's, precisely.

But how did musicians actually play for Lully and Rameau? And how can we be sure that that is how they are playing for us? Once again the documentation is exceptional. Lully's band remained so famous after its maître's death that a Savoyard violinist composer named Georg Muffat, who apprenticed in Paris and who worked in his maturity for the episcopal court of Passau, one of those ambitious mini-Versailleses that dotted the Germanic landscape, saw fit in 1698 to peddle a little guide for string players that promised to reveal all the secrets of "the French Manner According to the Late Monsieur Lully's Method."

Most of these secrets have to do with maintaining uniformity of bowing and sharp articulation of meter. (Others have to do with tuning low to avoid shrillness and strain, with altering the ostensibly even rhythms of the notated music to avoid "the sluggish, the crude and the dull," and with the proper execution of graces.) A string player following Muffat's rules will find his bow far more often in the air, and the notes far less connected (legato), than one who follows the path of least resistance—and this conforms exactly to the difference between the French way and the ordinary "operatic" way of delivering a texted line. The one emphasizes consonants, the other vowels. The one emphasizes the words, the other the feeling-tone. The one favors Apollonian understanding, the other emotional afflatus.

It would be an understatement to say that Christie has absorbed all this information and rejoices in it. But while early music revivalists like to emphasize their dependence on hard evidence—it lends authority, after all, to what they do—that does not explain their best accomplishments. Quite the contrary, it sells them short. All that hard evidence can do is furnish a base. To hew closely to that base, as many do in the name of "authenticity," is to turn minimum requirements into limits. Christie, by dint not only of his gifts but of long experience and tough self-criticism, has broken through to a level of internalized discipline that comes across as "naturalness" and "freedom" within tight constraints. He has left the sources far behind.

But not even that explains Christie's magnificent results. There is also the matter (which he has rightly stressed) of language and diction, and its relationship not only to the rhythm of the music, but also to its dynamic inflection in conjunction with harmony—and not only to the vocal music, but to the instrumental music as well. Christie's mastery of this dimension of the performance, still bound up fast with French musical self-identity, has been greatly abetted by the use of French-speaking casts (with some impressive American exceptions, such as the tenor Howard Crook and the soprano Ann Monoyios, who took the lead roles in Christie's performances of *Atys* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music last year). And Christie ensures the courtly predominance of the verbal and the literary through an exacting rehearsal technique that begins (as he has described it) with spoken mastery of the libretto. A decidedly actorish and unsingerly kind of vocal nuance enlivens the recitatives in a Christie performance. This is what really sets his work apart, and, one willingly imagines, marries it to its historical model.

Still, in this musicological age one must assume that others are equally conversant with the historical record; and there have been enough earlier attempts to revive French court operas with native casts and native conductors to indicate that the real secret of *l'école Christie* must lie somewhere else. It is, in fact, the Lully secret, but not everyone can be a Lully. Not every gifted musician, in other words, is so luckily situated and so blessed with nerve as to become an absolute despot. Christie, combining the roles of teacher and employer, has a great and self-renewing reservoir of fresh talent at his disposal, and he does not hesitate to exploit it in ruthless pursuit of his vision down to the smallest detail. "A great many of my soloists began as my pupils and this is integral to what we do," he has told an interviewer. "I believe that one thing that very quickly destroys French music is a lack of homogeneity. When everyone has his or her own idea of what French vocal style should be—that is fatal." Even more frankly, he allows that if his singers have worked out a homogeneous approach, "this is because the need for a sense of homogeneity has been drummed into them."

Spoken like Lully himself—or like his

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king. This is the old, practically defunct conception of maestrohood. It was memorably described by the English lawyer Roger North, a contemporary of Lully, who in the late seventeenth century was already lamenting its decline; a musical entertainment, he wrote,

> ought to proceed as a drama, firework or indeed every public delight, by judicious steps, one setting off another, and the whole in a series connected and concluding in a perfect acme, and then ceasing all at once—all which cannot be done but by an absolute dictator, who may coerce and punish the republican mob of music masters.

Christie is such an imperious one. Even audiences (to judge by the reports of their public spokesmen, the newspaper reviewers) feel the pressure of his glare. The really conspicuous difference between his exquisitely refined Apollonian shows and other operatic performances at a comparable level of achievement is a political difference: for all the singing planets and the dancing constellations, there are no stars on Christie's stage. Which is just the way it used to be at the Palais Royal, where the only star (as Saint-Evremond so airily attested) was the *batteur de mesure* in the pit, who jealously guarded his prerogatives and eventually paid for them with his life.

The closely integrated, noncompetitive sense of ensemble that results from this control has been described as "democratic"—just the sort of cruel, unintended joke that used to be embodied in the official name of Honecker's Germany. But the pretense of democracy is not Christie's. He openly avows the political source of his artistic success. And even if one gets it as wrong as the reviewer I have quoted, one cannot affirm the artistic success without affirming the politics that underwrites it. It is still a politics of sacrifice.

Does that matter? When we applaud the perfection of execution that can be achieved only by the suppression of human individuality, are we applauding only the results or also the suppression? When we are swayed by a vision like Christie's, is it only an artistic vision—a "transcendent" vision, as some of us like to say—that sways us, or is it a vision of the world? When faced with a beautiful art that affirms an ugly politics, can we vote for the art and reject the politics? Are these distinctions, finally, tenable at all?

These questions used to be easier to answer; but the ones whose easy answers set the tone—Eliot, Pound, Stravinsky—have turned out to be painfully complicated figures with whom we can no longer easily come to terms. And so the nettling questions persist. For in the works of French baroque opera, no less than in the works of Eliot, Pound and Stravinsky, what is ugly about the politics in large part determined the nature of the art.

Because it must affirm an elaborate established order, the art of the ancien régime can never allow signification—the strict filtering of all sensory impressions through an elaborate, established code of meaning—to give way to a more primal, less mediated response that might prove socially disruptive. (Remember the anarchists in the balcony of the St. Petersburg opera.) For this reason, such an art can brook no prima donnas of any sex. It can allow no voice to be heard that is capable not only of playing a god, but also of *being* a god or (what is more usual) a goddess, a diva.

And that is why the tone of fastidious anti-diva criticism, from Saint-Evremond through Joseph Kerman and on into the discourse of "early music" and "authenticity," so often swells up beyond primness into a tone of shrill desperation. Such criticism always means far more than it says, precisely because the issues it raises are at bottom inescapably, if tacitly, political. Opera criticism, and even opera history, will always be about lots more than opera, because opera is about lots more than music. Conventional snob criticism and conventional academic historiography, which have dependably promoted courtly values over commercial ones, and which have always exalted the notated score over the sounding medium, are all about control. They are sacrificial politics by other means.

So while one cannot fail to respond with delight to any one of Christie's tasteful evocations of a vanished absolutist world, something there is that does not love the vogue they have achieved. There is about it a certain *je ne sais quoi* that is very much not to taste. Could it be, perhaps, a *soupçon* of *revanchiste* nostalgia? Risibly belated, perhaps, but there it is. The audience for early music, like the audience for new music, tends to be a self-congratulating coterie, and musical antiquarians do tend to be Tories. I find it difficult to shake off the smug animadversions about the French revolution that the musicologist Hugh Macdonald, for example, saw fit to work into a lecture on Beethoven's Ninth during the revolutionary bicentennial year, even as the daily headlines detailing the collapse of totalitarianism in Europe might have furnished a more appropriate focus for his remarks. "The French Revolution didn't have much to do with fraternity at all," he gibed; "Beethoven in his deluded way went on thinking it did." The self-mythologizing operatic legacy of the ancien régime and the project of its revival (lavishly subsidized by the nationalistic and self-mythologizing if nominally Socialist *nouveau régime* of François Mitterand) seem quite haughty enough without the gratuitous digs that William Christie habitually aims at the mass public, which is unaware (to quote one of his sallies) "that Pluto is not just the name of a funny Walt Disney dog."

Christie, who in his adopted country is a bit of a political figure in his own (far) right and a notorious crony of the powerful, does a lot of gloating. Some of it verges on the pharisaical. During a visit to New York in 1992 that coincided with the peak of tension arising out of the vicissitudes of the NEA, he blustered to a reporter that residence in a cultured nation like France has spared him all such hassle. But surely he realized even as he spoke that projects such as his, artistically unassailable and at the same time unthreatening to established power, are just the ones that the NEA feels safest in sponsoring; and surely he understands that the whole reason for controversy about the NEA was precisely the exposure, and the turning into overt policy, of the abiding interest that our government shares with all other governments in furthering projects that embody, just like Christie's, a politics of affirmation.

V.

So the War of the Buffoons is not over. The music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is still a site of political contention. And to confirm this, you do not have to seek out Les Arts Florissants or develop a taste for its recondite repertoire. You have only to go to the movies, where a film by Alain Corneau entitled *Tous les matins du monde* (after the novel by Pascal Quignard, on which the author based the screenplay) has become the improbable object of a growing cult. In this country the film has not had the wild commercial success that it enjoyed in France, where it was seen by millions, ran away with the Oscars (that is, Césars) and produced a soundtrack spin-off (distributed here by Harmonia Mundi USA, which is also William Christie's record company) that had a Michael Jacksonish sale. But its appeal in America, even so, has been spectacular, considering its subject (the lives and loves of viola da gamba players) and considering that it takes music—the genuine historical article, "historically" (and beautifully) performed by well-known early music specialists—so seriously.

The "early music" movement has been happily baffled by this success, which seems to represent a breakthrough in

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public recognition for an altogether esoteric branch of classical music (and this at a time when classical music generally is perceived to be undergoing terminal marginalization). Continuous screenings of the film were joyously incorporated into the program of this year's Boston Early Music Festival, and the early music press has been in ecstasy. And yet the reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement*, Julie Anne Sadie, herself a gambist, while relishing the ostensible triumph of her cause, admits that it "gives pause" to think "that all this should catch the public imagination."

There is less of a paradox here than meets the eye, I think. *Tous les matins du monde* is not really about seventeenth-century music at all. While expertly camouflaged by period and local color—a camouflage that unusually extends in very welcome fashion to the soundtrack as well as the lovely sets, costumes and paysages—the notions and the values in which the film trades are not merely anachronistic, they are positively antithetical to those of the period in which it is set. Far from a celebration of the aesthetic embodied in the work of Christie and the other authentic revivalists of the period, the film is a pointed reaction or defense against it. *Tous les matins du monde* is not a very good guide to the world of seventeenth-century French music, but it is an excellent guide, perhaps the best of guides, to some popular musical attitudes of the present day.

The plot is based on the relationship between Marin Marais (1656-1728), probably the greatest of the French gambists at the peak of his instrument's prestige (he is played as a youth by Guillaume Depardieu and as a man by Depardieu's famous father, Gérard), and Marais's teacher, known as Le Sieur de Sainte-Colombe (played by Pierre Marielle), whom recent research has tentatively identified as a certain Augustin Dautrecourt, who came from a district near Lyon called Sainte-Colombe and who was probably dead by 1692. About Marais, a great public figure who published a wealth of music for his instrument and wrote a famous opera, historians know a great deal. (This knowledge is mostly ignored in the screenplay.) About Sainte-Colombe, practically nothing is known. His surviving works, none of them published until 1973, consist of a single manuscript of rather sketchy viol duets, once in the famous library of the pianist Alfred Cortot, and a couple of solo pieces found in a manuscript now at Durham cathedral in England (together with a *tombeau* in his memory by his gambist son, absent in the movie, where Sainte-Colombe is given only daughters).

Nature may abhor a vacuum, but nothing better suits a historical fictioneer. From a few scattered facts and anecdotes culled from dedications, newspaper items, the duet manuscript and particularly from the gossipy biography of Marais in Titon du Tillet's *Parnasse françois* of 1732, one gathers that Sainte-Colombe was an outstanding virtuoso who reformed the playing technique of his instrument but remained unattached to the royal court. Why? Evidently because he was a *sieur*, a noble amateur, and did not need to work for a living. On the empty slate of his biography, however, Quignard has inscribed a more useful answer. The "Sainte-Colombe" of the novel and the movie is a mythological being constructed in calculated opposition to all the institutions that ruled the world in which the historical Sainte-Colombe lived: he is a rustic, a recluse, a Jansenist, an ascetic, a figure of inarticulate, tortured passions who despises court life, all diplomacy, all savoir faire. Jansenism apart, this is merely the stock romantic formula for artistic genius. The model for this hero is no seventeenth-century figure, it is Beethoven (or Byron or Berlioz or Alfred de Musset) as popularly, or mythically, conceived. In back of it all, of course, lies Frenhofer, the archetypal mad genius in Balzac's story, "The Un-known Masterpiece," another "seventeenth-century" avatar of romantic idealism.

Quignard's Sainte-Colombe spends all his time alone with his viol in a tree house that he ordered built for his solitude after the insupportable loss of his wife. (We know about the tree house from Titon du Tillet; the wife—that is, her untimely demise—is the novelist's invention.) But he is not quite alone there. By playing a *tombeau* in her memory ("Les pleurs," adapted from one of the duets by the Catalonian gambist Jordi Savall, the movie's music director), he finds that he can conjure up her shade and have her silent company. It is a lovely conceit, especially since it is centered lovingly around such a touching, dolorous, sensuous—and in its mellifluous legato, probably anachronistic—performance by Savall. Still, it advances a conception of music—as personal effusion, as transport from the here and now, as private retreat, as "transcendent"—that is the product of our pop-romantic time, not Sainte-Colombe's, and it fosters a mystique of art and its lonely makers ("creating for themselves alone...") that has ineluctable political implications.

That mystique forms the very basis of the movie's engrossing exploration of the relationship between Sainte-Colombe and Marais, and provides the basis for what drama there is in this contemplative film. Marais is caught between his teacher's idealism and the worldly success to which his teacher's instruction gives him access—another trite staple of film biography, but redeemed again by the way the marvelously performed music is allowed to do so much of the actors' talking for them. Ultimately, and inevitably, Marais is thrown out: "You don't play badly," Sainte-Colombe roars, "but you don't have *la musique*!" Now that strikes a chord! How many of us have been similarly tortured by our teachers with mystifying dressings-down (even if they no longer dare hurl our instruments against the wall), and then wondered agonizingly for years what this "music" that we didn't have might be? (There has even been an anthropological study, and an illuminating one, of "music" as a postromantic discourse of power-negotiation in the world of the contemporary conservatory: *Music, Talent and Performance* by Henry Kingsbury.) At the end of the movie, the same hallucinogenic property of "Les pleurs" enables a posthumous reconciliation.

The dilemma of divided loyalty is symbolized in the person of Sainte-Colombe's elder daughter, Madeleine (played by Anne Brochet), who betrays her father by continuing to pass on his secrets to Marais, who leads Marais under the tree house in order that he may become his former teacher's secret sharer and who finally takes him as her lover. In the later sequences her health declines (as atonement, perhaps, but also as a reproach) as his career ascends. There is a final confrontation in which she, on the verge of death, cruelly criticizes his performance of a piece that he had dedicated to her, thus finally assuming her father's voice.

By this time Marais has become Lully's successor at Versailles, and his rare appearances chez Sainte-Colombe in plumed hat and rouged face contrast jarringly with the dark surroundings. Another time-honored, or shopworn, romantic metaphor is being prepared. He is summoned to Madeleine's dismal deathbed from a rehearsal at the Sun King's palace (of a trivial piece of Lully's, naturally, the "Marche pour la Cérémonie des Turcs" from *Le bourgeois gentil'homme*, performed with regimental spit and polish by Savall's ensemble, Le Concert des Nations). After her death Marais, too, becomes guiltily obsessed with "Les pleurs" and begins paying nocturnal visits of penitence on solitary horseback from the court's chandeliered brilliance to the mute, sylvan gloom of the Sainte-Colombe estate, where he stakes out the

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tree house in hopes that the aging master, twice bereaved, will break his melancholy silence and play so that he, Marais, might discover *la musique* at last. Sainte-Colombe is thus formally identified as the truth-bearing medium of Night, "the land where sunlight casts no beams; the sacred realm from which my mother sent me forth," in the words of Wagner's Tristan. It is the realm to which the true artist's soul craves return from the "brillant soleil" tawdrily worshiped at court (to cite a famous number from Rameau's *Les Indes galantes*, recorded with aplomb by William Christie).

These secret visits go on for three years, we are told, until Marais finally confronts Sainte-Colombe and demands one final lesson. At last "Les pleurs" is heard complete, the way Sainte-Colombe wrote it, as a duet for two viols, performed in almost total darkness. It is an unforgettably fraught scene of atonement and male bonding; and the way that the music is integrated into the cinematic vision does honor to both arts. That it has nothing to do with the role of music, or of musical thought, in the seventeenth century would be an unworthy cavil, were it not for all the claims to the contrary. (The historical Sainte-Colombe's "Les pleurs," while harmonically rich and poetically recitative-like, is in fact just one section extracted from a "concert à deux violes esgales" that places it not in a context of intense personal pathos, but in a typically "baroque" descriptive and mythological sequence that includes carillon effects, an "Apel de Charon" and even a gavotte titled "Joye des Elizées," Elysian revels.) That is of no artistic account. The scene is powerful, as is the film, because it has everything to do with our contemporary assumptions about "musicality," about "genius," about expressive purpose. No film that I have seen affirms these assumptions as earnestly or as effectively, albeit behind an anachronistic, antiquarian screen.

And of course the film has a lot to say, implicitly, about politics—about today's politics. Here, of course, is where the anachronisms loom largest. They are actively abetted by Harmonia Mundi in its marketing strategy. Their "Teaching Guide" to *Tous les matins*, meant to encourage its use in schools, lists the following leading questions among suggested "Discussion Points":

> —Sainte-Colombe asks Marais, "Can your heart not feel? Music," he says, "is not for pleasing kings' ears or for dancers. I will take you on for your grief, not your skill." How might the conflict that Sainte-Colombe refers to be a concern to all artists?
>
> —Patronage of the arts reached a pinnacle under Louis XIV. What sort of complications might a relationship between a patron and an artist cause?
>
> —"I like sunlight in my hand, not gold," says Sainte-Colombe, responding to an invitation to become a court musician. In what way might employment compromise an artist's devotion to his or her art?

Thus American schoolchildren are to receive their basic training in oppositional politics, as decreed by a thrice-familiar pop-romantic or pop-modernist discourse that diagnoses artistic temperament as an asocial or narcissistic character trait.

It is a bad lesson as well as a banal one, for it universalizes and inculcates attitudes that have led the "serious" arts into their twentieth-century cul-de-sac. (And it is a hypocritical lesson, too, when it comes from the commercial sector as part of a sales pitch.) Such notions originated precisely in reaction to the decline of noble patronage, and had never existed before worldly conditions called them forth. Lully may well have been as grandiose a sociopath as ever emerged from the ranks of musicians and as superb a genius, but his concept of art was based on service. If he was opposed, it was only by those who wished to supplant him in his opportunity to serve.

Le Sieur de Sainte-Colombe might have been one of them, though we probably will never know. Quignard's and Corneau's "Sainte-Colombe," like so many modern artists, has purchased his freedom from conflicts, complications and compromise at the price of irrelevance and impotence. A man of mysteriously independent means, he can afford it, just as he can afford to toss Marais a purse to replace the instrument that he has destroyed in a fit of highfalutin pique. That is the most insidious lesson of all. The wealthy are not the ones to be preaching virtuous privation. And politically savvy members of Congress, musicians, filmmakers and promoters are not the ones to be preaching about the political innocence of art.

RICHARD TARUSKIN is a professor of music at the University of California, Berkeley and has played the viola da gamba professionally for twelve years.

Pressure Points

BY ALAN WOLFE

The Anatomy of Antiliberalism by Stephen Holmes

(Harvard University Press, 330 pp., $29.95)

Who would have thought that an entire book could be devoted to *anti*liberalism? In 1949, Lionel Trilling wrote that "it is not conducive to the real strength of liberalism that it should occupy the field alone"; and six years later Louis Hartz published *The Liberal Tradition in America*, which both celebrated and, in its own way, bemoaned the liberal hegemony over American thought. American intellectuals, when fascism had just been defeated and communism was still in power, were unable to discover an antiliberalism worthy of respect. Yet in the 1990s, with liberalism triumphant, Stephen Holmes finds enough antiliberals to fill 300 pages.

There are two kinds of antiliberals worth discussing, according to Holmes, who rightly excludes Marxist criticisms of liberalism as an old story. The first kind, the hard-nosed, is explicitly or implicitly antidemocratic. They are represented by Joseph de Maistre, Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss. The other kind, the soft antiliberals, who wax nostalgic for a more organic past and look askew on secular modernity, include Alasdair MacIntyre, Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Christopher Lasch and contemporary "communitarians." Both groups mistakenly believe that the flaws of liberal society are due to the theoretical problems of liberal theory. By raising the stakes over ideas, they can hardly complain if someone comes along and takes their ideas seriously.

The problem with the hard antiliberals, says Holmes, is that they got their facts wrong. Liberal citizens are not the bloodstained sinners that Maistre claimed, for the orgy of violence that came in the wake of the French Revolution turned out to have been the exception, not the rule, of liberal conduct. Similarly, Schmitt's emphasis on the weakness of will that characterizes liberal society is empirically fallacious; liberal societies *can* make decisions, they *are* rather good at winning wars and they *do*

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understand tribalism and group irrationalities, which is why they try to make religion a private affair. And Strauss not only failed to understand politics, he also corrupted philosophy by insisting melodramatically that its leading figures wrote in a code that only Strauss and his followers could understand. His mistake was to believe that the philosophers' words were so important that "a slip of the tongue could burn up the nurturing atmosphere that keeps ordinary mortals alive."

But the chapters Holmes devotes to dead and hard opponents of liberalism are only a warm-up for his zestfully nasty attacks on soft and living opponents of liberalism. If the former are wrong about their facts, the latter shift their argument around depending on whatever point they want to make. They argue simultaneously for community and individualism, relativism and absolutism, society and nature, conformity and heroism. For Holmes, these inconsistencies are far more than a problem of sloppy thought. Unwilling to follow their initial assumptions to their logical conclusions, their inconsistencies are a failure of intellectual nerve.

MacIntyre, for Holmes, is the "typical" antiliberal, whose main book, *After Virtue*, constitutes "a summa of the postwar antiliberal mind," and is little more than "a warehouse stacked to the ceiling with well-worn perspectives, accusations and arguments." Those arguments have had a baleful influence on writers such as Lasch, whose blind denunciations of economic growth cannot possibly be taken seriously; "only a Westerner could dismiss (and even then one wonders how) the problems of disease, famine, poverty and violence as an obsession of the decadent liberal mind." Writers like these idealize moral consensus, fail to understand the dangerous side of society, falsely dichotomize selfish and selfless behavior, misunderstand liberalism's alternatives and retreat into liberalism when it suits them.

Holmes is a brilliant polemicist and a sparkling writer. "Antiliberals sneer at liberalism and describe it as one vast mistake," he writes. "My response is just as argumentative as their own writings." Indeed it is. Surely the ideas being discussed here should get people angry and are worth fighting about. And yet Holmes's belligerent stance comes with a price. *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* reads best the first time through. When one returns in the hope of clarifying the issues at stake, Holmes's one-sided intolerance—odd, to say the least, in a book defending liberalism—leads him into inconsistencies as serious as those he finds in others.

The most singular flaw in Holmes's book is its failure to make the case that there really is such a thing as antiliberalism. His targets, certainly, are selectively chosen. Maistre had no direct influence (nor, given his monarchial convictions, could he ever have had a direct influence) on American thought. Schmitt's influence is confined, rather weirdly, to the Marxist left, which finds his critique of liberalism similar to its own, but Holmes leaves out Marxist antiliberalism. Strauss, of course, does have a substantial American following, but Holmes does not discuss Straussians such as Allan Bloom, or Straussianism, which is probably the only contemporary American school of thought that can justifiably be called antiliberal.

Considering that the European writers whom he treats are either fascist or protofascist, Holmes ought to do far more than he does to demonstrate their links to things or thoughts American. Although he claims that his aim "is not to indulge in guilt by association," I see no reason why MacIntyre or Lasch are obligated, as Holmes insists they are, to "distinguish themselves . . . from their most unsavory precursors," for it remains unproven that the unsavory are their precursors. The soft antiliberals discussed at length by Holmes are all democrats; even MacIntyre, who can be incautious in his language, writes within a tradition that accepts certain aspects of the Enlightenment. Better inconsistent adherence to liberal democracy than consistent support for counterrevolution. What makes Holmes's soft antiliberals soft is precisely what makes them part of a completely different tradition than Maistre or Schmitt.

Even if we accept the argument that there are forms of antiliberalism that owe something to European authoritarianism, Holmes is arbitrary in those whom he selects to represent them. Why include a sloppy thinker like Unger, who, by the terms of Holmes's own argument, is as much a superliberal as an antiliberal? Holmes not only includes thinkers whose ideas are silly, he also excludes, or downplays, thinkers whose ideas are important. You would never know from this book that one of the most serious intellectual challenges of the twentieth century has been to try and reconcile the claims of liberty and community. This was the major task of John Dewey, the British neo-Hegelian T. H. Green and contemporary writers such as Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer, all of whom Holmes passes over. (Taylor is commented on parenthetically.)

"Polemicists with a bias against liberal thought regularly distort the significance of central liberal ideas by replacing the counterconcepts that originally bestowed political significance on liberal principles with antonyms of their own choosing, which were either ignored or explicitly rejected by the early liberals," Holmes writes. But so, if Holmes is any indication, do polemicists with a bias against antiliberalism. Whatever these writers think of themselves, Holmes is convinced that "they are representatives of a single tradition. That tradition speaks through them, with or without their knowledge." In exactly such a way is antiliberalism an antonym of Holmes's own choosing, and an arbitrary one. "By using antonym substitution, antiliberals make the past difficult to understand," Holmes claims. And he distorts the present by trying to tell one story when there are many strands that do not easily fit together.

Holmes is not sure whether the liberal tradition is a set of principles or a disposition. If it is the former, then those who question the "naked public square" or who argue that obligations consistently ought to trump rights can indeed be considered antiliberal. In reaction to them, Holmes is correct to insist that certain liberal truths are timeless. It is astonishing how often we need to be reminded of the arguments in favor of religious pluralism or free speech. But not even Holmes thinks that these principles are absolutes.

Quite the contrary. He argues that classical liberalism can only be understood in the context in which it emerged. Thinkers such as Locke and Smith did not argue in favor of an atomized society, according to Holmes; their beliefs in freedom of speech or the market "are unthinkable in the absence of a dense network of social relations." Liberalism was not economistic. It spoke of duties as well as rights. Its suspicion of the designs of censors and priests should not be read

Walking Until You Come Home

Up over the skid of granite
talus, the acres of bristle
in shades of fire and garnet
lying frigid in their cycle—
I make a perfect target—
Up over the massive shoulders
of glacial debris, blueberry
scrub on all sides in blood colors,
gray stones and gray skies that hurry—
My heart has no shutters—
Up over and over the ridges,
missing nothing now; the shallow
of crisp leaves with sawtooth edges,
one split tree without a shadow—
No one's holding grudges.

MARIE MERKEL

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as moral skepticism. If liberalism appears to downplay the common good, this is because of its suspicions toward ruling elites. Liberals were not afraid of community; their objection was to monopoly. Liberalism's commitment to private property represents an effort to "disentangle authority and obedience from religious life," not a cold-hearted materialism.

In this way Holmes gets his liberals to have it all. Unlike antiliberals, they are perfectly consistent. And when they appear not to be consistent, it is because they had good reasons. Despite the obvious problem with this kind of argument—the arguer, on these terms, can never lose—there is an important truth here. All great political thinkers believe simultaneously in unchanging principle and in adaptation to specific circumstances. How odd, then, that Holmes, who insists that the antiliberals never appreciate the context in which liberalism arose, fails to appreciate the context in which communitarian critics of liberalism flourish.

Is Holmes suggesting that America does not suffer from excess litigation, market failures or a perversion of the language of rights? Would he be in favor of attaching obligations to the receipt of welfare benefits? Does he believe that there are no problems with discipline in American schools? Has he any worry that a sense of loyalty in America has been weakened by consumer culture or television? Since liberalism represents progress, should contemporary thinkers not raise questions about modernity? Since Bosnia is being destroyed, should we refrain from discussing the need for roots? Is Holmes's colleague Cass Sunstein an antiliberal for arguing that campus speech codes, if they are properly drawn, can pass constitutional muster? Is Justice Harry Blackmun a liberal for believing that abortion is a constitutional right in the first trimester, but an antiliberal for seeing a state interest in the matter in the third trimester?

What Holmes dismisses as antiliberalism can also be understood as an effort to adopt liberal principles to the specific dilemmas of late twentieth-century America. For America has been experiencing a revival of political theory in which nobody, traditional liberals or revisionist liberals, has satisfactorily reconciled liberal principles with contemporary realities. And so a touch of generosity may be in order. We ought to view most thinkers who wrestle with these issues—and certainly most of the non-Europeans discussed by Holmes—as engaged in a common project from different points of departure. Holmes points out that the market is impossible in the absence of dense social ties, but the market of ideas, at least as he engages in it, is a Hobbesian war with no quarter given.

Holmes thinks that the claims of liberty and community will never be reconciled, except on terms established by liberals. Yet had he been less polemical, he might have recognized that, as a good liberal, he is tied together with the objects of his criticism. We are not dealing with liberals and antiliberals, but with individual writers who have differences of opinion about where a boundary should be drawn. But they all agree that there should be a boundary, which distinguishes them all from antidemocrats of every stripe.

Liberalism is strengthened, not weakened, by the rise of a concern about community. The early postwar intellectuals who wrote about the antiliberal vacuum in American life understood this. It was in such a spirit of liberal concern that Trilling discussed Mill's great essay on Bentham and Coleridge, lamenting that we failed to produce a conservative worthy of the respect that Mill had for the latter. As if to demonstrate the poverty of the intellectual situation, Trilling devoted an entire essay to Kipling only to conclude that Kipling "was one of liberalism's major intellectual misfortunes," for his simple platitudes "tempted liberals to be content with easy victories of right feeling and with moral self-congratulation."

Holmes's rather self-congratulatory tone detracts from what could have been a powerful addition to contemporary debates about liberty and community. In dismissing his interlocutors as contemptuously as he does, in fact, he disproves his own case, for if they are as inconsistent and incorrect as he maintains, there is no antiliberalism whose anatomy we need to know. His lively book would be less frustrating if he saw that liberalism's critics, if they have anything worthwhile to say, are doing liberalism a favor.

ALAN WOLFE is University Professor and professor of sociology at Boston University. He is the author most recently of *The Human Difference: Animals, Computers and the Necessity of Social Science* (University of California Press).

The secret poetry of the Catalan modernist.

Miró, Miró, on the Wall

BY JOHN UPDIKE

The Joan Miró show, an ambitious, non-traveling assemblage of 300 works, including over 160 paintings, at New York's Museum of Modern Art, holds a number of surprises. The giant Picasso and Matisse shows, at the same museum, confirmed what we already knew, in the thundering colors of a massive retrospective; the Miró, which comes on the 100th anniversary of his birth, throws light into some unexpected corners and nooks in the divigatious progress of an artist who appears to have been thinking all the time.

Picasso—that fellow Spaniard whose voracious shadow always threatened to swallow the diminutive, younger Miró—and Matisse were forces of nature, harvesters of sunlight. Miró had to supply his own force, out of his busy, buzzing head and his earthy Catalan roots. Like Henry Moore, he became in the end a modern art celebrity; their signature biomorph forms served as company logos on their long-lived personal industries. Their rather reclusive, meditative geniuses achieved a global distribution and publicity that it is easy to resent. In fact Miró struggled gallantly against becoming formulaic, while remaining loyal to the not very ample stock of private imagery—eyes, vaginas, male genitalia, birds, stars, moons, mustaches, the Catalan peasant hats called *barretinas*—that supplied his art. Rather early, he ceased to feed on nature, in the sense of perceived externality, while holding fast, in his titles and increasingly abstract brushwork, to echoes of the organic.

Joan Miró
Museum of Modern Art
Oct. 17, 1993 – Jan. 11, 1994
(catalogue 484 pp., $75, $37.50 paper)

The first surprise that greets us at the Museum of Modern Art is how good Miró was from the start, how stern and solid. The still lifes and the portraits done in his 20s, oils from a dark palette, have a knit intensity which it was the labor of his life to lighten and to explode. In *Nord-Sud* (1917), he is already at work creating a scattered effect, a slightly spinning disassociation

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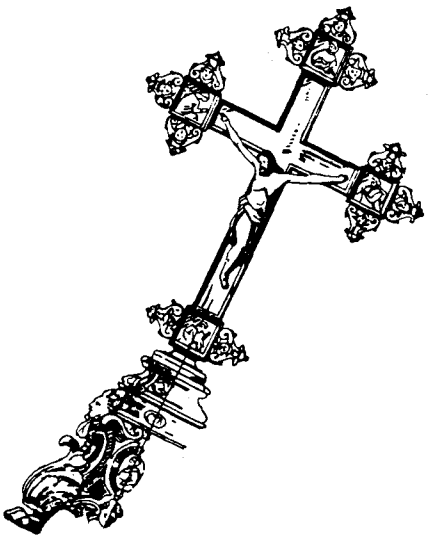
Are Catholics Christians?



Yes, of course! Catholics are the original Christians. The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus on the Rock who was Peter. But not every Catholic lives the full Christian life.

It's painful to note that there are Catholics who are biblically illiterate, who would sooner play bingo than pray, and who replace Jesus with Mary. No wonder the Second Vatican Council was necessary!

But the Council unwittingly allowed other distortions to creep into the Church: moral permissiveness and a reduction of Christianity to "being nice" and political correctness.

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are, in union with the Pope, contending for a more authentically Christian Catholicism. And, as befits a magazine rooted in the rich heritage of Catholic intellectuality, we do so with reason and erudition. As Berkeley's John T. Noonan Jr. says, we "embody the vital central Catholic intellectual tradition."

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of elements, including a yellow volume, thick as a cigar box, lettered "Gœthe." His somber native bent resisted airiness. The element of collage in "*La Publicidad*" and *Flower Vase* (1917) floats like a pale scrap on the oily dark tangle of the patterned tabletop. The Cézannesque green and orange planes of *Montroig Sant Ramon* (1916) are incongruously solid, like folded clay, and are topped by a cube without a touch of cubist fragmentation. In *Prades, the Village* (1917), as if despairing of ever getting the reckless Fauvist dash, Miró throws abstract colorful stripes into the foreground of a somber, academically drawn village and church.

The cubists and the Fauves wished to disassemble the world visually; Miró's itch is to take it apart phenomenologically, as a set of signifiers. What is significant to him—his own face, naked women, the semitropical landscape of Montroig, near Barcelona—he cannot quite abandon to the cubist chopping-machine. The two large early nudes of the exhibit, a standing nude from 1918 and a seated nude from the following year, are slashed but still intact, still fleshy. The first, a mauve sex-machine in her boudoir of luridly patterned hangings and carpet, is rather intimidating. By the time of the second, Miró is painting in thinly applied, subdued brown tones, and his nude is, with her fat brown pigtail, circular navel and mirror like a Ping-Pong paddle, rather seductive. Between the self-portrait of 1917 and that of 1919, the subject appears to have aged fifteen years and a large stylistic distance has been traversed, to the quietly edgy, carefully combed, spottily concentrated manner from which the artist will take his flying leap into surrealism.

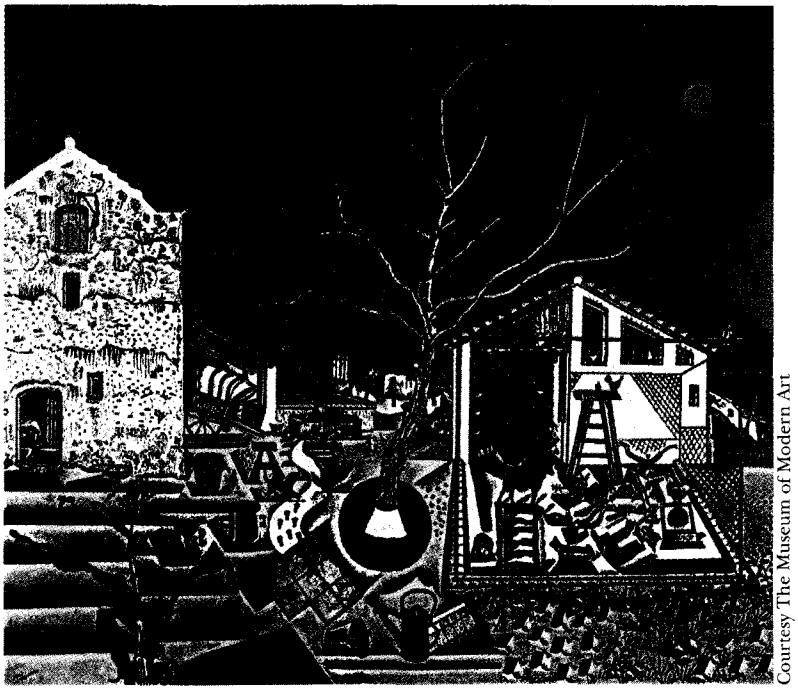
His rural landscapes, with their feathery, distinct leaves, and furrowed fields as tidy as tiling, impinged on literary history when *The Farm* (1921-22) was purchased in 1926 by Ernest Hemingway. The writer told A.E. Hotchner, as recorded in Hotchner's *Papa Hemingway*, that

> Miró and I were good friends; we were working hard but neither of us was selling anything. My stories would all come back with rejection slips and Miró's unsold canvases were piled up all over his studio. There was one that I had fallen in love with—a painting of his farm down south—it haunted me and even though I was broke I wanted to own it.

According to Carlos Baker's biography, Hemingway borrowed 5,000 francs to pay for it, presented it to his wife, Hadley, for her 34th birthday and hung it over their bed. He and the short, dapper, dignified Miró were friends and, even more incongruously, occasional boxing partners.

Miró had come relatively late to Paris, at the age of 26, explaining, "You have to be an international Catalan; a homespun Catalan is not, and never will be, worth anything in the world." He subsequently spent half of his years in Paris, returning for the other half to Barcelona and Montroig. One tries to look at *The Farm* with Hemingway's eyes, seeking what made him fall in love. Under a cold blue sky and small gray moon, a tan landscape and two white buildings hold a meticulous inventory of tools, furniture and farm animals; like Hemingway's early prose, the painting is possessed by an ecstasy of simple naming, a seemingly innocent directness that is yet challenging and ominous. He and Miró, their reminiscences reveal, were both often hungry in Paris, and hungry people see with a terrible clarity. Miró, perhaps jokingly, later claimed that hallucinations of near-starvation lay behind his surreal imagery.

The Museum of Modern Art has hung his celebrated *Farm*—which passed from Mary Hemingway to the National Gallery—in a corner along with *The Hunter* (1923-24), the canvas that achieved the mature Miró manner, in which representational figures are reduced to floating ideograms and the shadow of the third dimension is dismissed from what Marcel Duchamp called a "two-dimensional cosmogony." The proximity of *The Farm* and *The Hunter* created a traffic jam of bumping, staring viewers, robotized by their educational headsets, and waiting to escape this gridlock of art-avid bodies gives one time to wonder whether Miró, when he turned his own corner into something "beyond painting," did not leave behind too much of the painterliness he was born with. Some of his pre-surreal canvases are magnificent in their blend of seeing and constructing—the self-portrait of 1919 and the *Portrait of a Spanish Dancer* (1921), the tightly packed *Horse, Pipe and Red Flower* (1920), the witty *Still Life – Glove and Newspaper* (1921), and the consummate *Still Life with Rabbit* (1920-21), whose three staring creatures are apparently still alive in this *nature morte*. Such works alone would assure Miró a place in the art books. Stepping away from the awkward corner to stride loosely through the many remaining rooms of the exhibit, one leaves behind an appealing tension, a taut post-cubist realism, and enters upon an impish and alarming freedom.



Courtesy The Museum of Modern Art

THE FARM (1921-22)

It is surprising to find that by the mid-'20s Miró had invented color-field painting. At first, canvases covered in a monochrome—green in *The Kiss* (1924), yellow in *Portrait of Mme B.* (1924) and *Head of Catalan Peasant, I* (1924), blue in *Head of Catalan Peasant, III* (1925) and *Personage* (1925)—are doodled upon with scarcely another dash of color. The process becomes even more audacious with *Photo* (1925), a largely bare canvas dabbled with a small puddle of blue captioned "*ceci est la couleur de mes rêves*," and then in *Painting* (1925), a yard-wide canvas solidly scrubbed blue, except for a minuscule sphere in the upper left corner, as lonely as a star in the cosmos. In *Head of Catalan Peasant III*, the scrubbing has some cloudlike contour and the stars are several in number, and in *Personage* the scrubbing is very thin and permits the viewer—a rare privilege—to see the anatomy of the stretcher boards behind the canvas.

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This advanced degree of self-referentiality, of painter-consciousness, would not be seen again until postwar America, and is abandoned in Miró's work to come, whose amoebic shapes and wandering lines take on a kind of superterrestrial substance. A leftover from Dada, the monochrome canvas serves not so much to dramatize the painter's action, or to engulf the viewer's field of vision, as to call into question, in metaphysical fashion, the ground upon which we, viewer and painter, stand. What is a painting? Since impressionism, the answer must be "some square inches of paint." One of the most effective of these paint-foremost paintings is *The Birth of the World* (1925), an eight-foot-high canvas down which spatterings of thin gray paint have been permitted to sun, in effective metaphor for the primeval chaos upon which a few basic shapes, triangle and circle, have been imposed.

But it does not do, as we move through the proliferating changes that Miró over the decades rung upon his little universe, to look for referents too specific. An asterisklike form may be one man's star and another man's stylized anus. Many of the paintings, colorful and relentlessly inventive as they are, pass through the eyes without much sticking fast. The Museum of Modern Art has collected Miró early and well, and the familiarity of their acquisitions arrests our somewhat bewildered progress—*Person Throwing a Stone at a Bird* (1926), with its amazing one-footed white Cyclops throwing without arms, beside a black sea under a green sky; and *Dutch Interior (I)* (1928), accompanied in this exhibit by a set of photographs tracing the far-fetched permutations whereby H. M. Sorgh's cozy genre painting *The Lutanist* (1661) is transformed into a tangle of blobs in which only a lute and a dog with a pipe in its mouth can be easily identified; and *Hirondelle–Amour* (1933-34), its swerving lines and quilt of color perhaps analogous to a swallow's flight or love's path; and *Still Life with Old Shoe* (1937), a throwback to the old meticulous still lifes, but in negative, in eerie neon colors.

Miró's world is darkening. The blue cosmic vacancies and arching trajectories are closing down into darkness and, in the humanoid figures, a Picassoesque sense of torture. In the late 1930s, black becomes a background color, upon which is scrawled in white *Une Étoile caresse le sein d'une négresse* (1938) or a scattering of suns and moons and phosphorescent fish does for a *Self-Portrait II* (1938). *Woman Haunted by the Passage of the Bird-Dragonfly, Omen of Bad News* (1938), though designed to decorate a nursery, is full of terror, unenigmatically. Much of Miró's work of the 1930s seems an ugly cartooning, garish and mock-primitive.

But an aesthetic triumph, and a victory over the horror descending on Europe, came in 1940, when Miró initiated a series of 23 gouaches, on a uniform size of paper, that he completed 20 months later, having fled with his family from Normandy, which was being bombed by the Germans, to neutral Spain. It is the feat of this exhibition to have assembled in one room all 23 gouaches of the so-called Constellation Series; together they form sublime chamber music, as the murky if antic figures give way to a jubilant dance of more and more constellated stars, spheres and hourglasses. The visual gaiety of the room is dizzying; the globules of black and red, green, yellow and blue chirp and chime and twitter. We are reminded, not for the first time in this show, that Miró's father was a watchmaker. By miniaturizing his motifs, and winding the space around them tighter, Miró rescues them from flabbiness; many of his pre-war paintings figure forth a stretched limpness like Dalí without perspective, or Tanguy without modeling. Most of the Constellation Series was displayed in New York, at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, early in 1945, and, according to the exhibit brochure, "their flickering, all-over quality is frequently said to have influenced the young generation of American painters known as the Abstract Expressionists."

In 1945 Miró was 52, with over three decades of creativity left. He had become one of the great names of modernism. His riddling, doodlelike imagery appeared as murals, on tapestries, in fabrics and ceramics. Bulbous-horned sculptures, bronze and stone, large and small, added a new, Mayan note to his range. In his prosperity, he was able to afford a large studio, in Palma de Mallorca, and painted there, in riposte to the abstract expressionist movement he had partly inspired, huge single-color canvases, whose decoration, though minimal, seems to betray some uncertainty; the New York aesthetic rigorously expunged even a microbe of depiction. Abstract expressionism with its walls of paint defied verbal formulation, whereas in Miró there is always a hint of a concept, a lurking poem.

More wholehearted, in these last rooms, are the stabbing gestural paintings that, like an old shaman crying out to his fading gods, fling across the canvas in a kind of agony. Only in old age did Miró dare draw directly with the brush: even the works most seemingly submissive to psychic automatism had a methodical background of preliminary sketch and canvas preparation. Miró's last works are giant cave paintings, in a cosmos turned cave. The final one of the show appears to have a devil in it, and a blood-tipped knife.

What was Miró thinking of, all these years? A literal deciphering of each of his runes, even if that were possible, says little about their visual effect, their meaning for a viewer. His paintings, unlike, say, those of Pollock or Picasso, are not self-explanatory; what you see is not quite what you get. Magic rites are being performed, but are they working? Surrealism was at heart a literary movement, based on the writings of Freud and elaborated into theory by the poet André Breton. Miró in his inscribed canvases and elaborate titles—*Woman at the Border of a Lake Irradiated by the Passage of a Swan; On the 13th the Ladder Brushed the Firmament; The Red Sun Gnaws at the Spider*—displays a literary bent; his frequent theoretical pronouncements and his highly systematic way of organizing his work imply a system behind his work, a web of code.

Critics like Carolyn Lanchner, who provides the admirably detailed introduction to this show's catalogue, are very welcome to puzzle away at the code, but in the meantime the lay viewer must wrestle with a sensation of exclusion as he glides from one opaquely symbol-laden canvas to the next. The ideogrammatic paintings of Paul Klee yield their meaning—their "import," one might better say—to a general awareness of the human condition; Miró by contrast has a perverse arcanum, bred perhaps of his Catalonian apartness from the run of European culture. He occupies an unstable place between figuration and abstraction; in 1923 he announced, "I have managed to break absolutely free of nature, and the landscapes have nothing to do with outer reality." On the other hand, he rejected an invitation to join a group of professedly abstract artists: "And they ask me into their deserted house, as if the marks I put on a canvas did not correspond to a concrete representation of my mind, did not possess a profound reality, were not a part of the real itself." The reality is personal, and—Walt Whitman, whom Miró admired, to the contrary—the personal is not self-evidently the site where "the eruption of the infinite in the finite takes place." Miró had the modernist impulse to formulate a new religion, but the privacy of his materials left the iconography frequently inscrutable.

JOHN UPDIKE's latest book is his *Collected Poems 1953-1993* (Knopf). His novel *Brazil* is forthcoming from Knopf.

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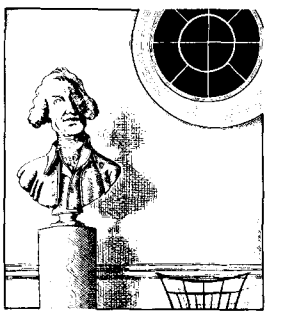
MONTICELLO DIARIST

Ornamental farms

A FEW MONTHS AGO, GARRY WILLS wrote an erudite piece in the *New York Review of Books* called "Jefferson the Aesthete." Far from the radical populist of historical myth, Wills argues, Jefferson was an aestheticized elitist of excessive refinement, who went on reckless buying sprees in Paris and cluttered his mountaintop chateau with Houdon busts, Sèvre table sculptures and a *fauteuil* from Marie Antoinette's own *ébéniste*. To celebrate Jefferson's 250th birthday, the curators of Monticello have located and borrowed some 150 artifacts from the thousands that Jefferson's daughter auctioned off after his death. Wills contrasts the exhibition, in its gorgeous extravagance, with George Washington's house, Mount Vernon, which he says exudes a sense of moral purpose that Monticello lacks. After William Galston, the White House domestic policy adviser, attacked TNR as a temple of "aestheticized elitism" in our Correspondence section last week, a trip to Monticello seemed particularly apt, and so I rented a car and set out for Charlottesville.

SADLY, I CAN'T REPORT WHETHER or not Wills is correct about the visual drama of the accumulated display. After waiting in line for more than an hour, we were herded in and out of the house so quickly that the blue-and-white Wedgwood plates blurred into the black-and-gold damask chairs; and the only title I could make out in Jefferson's reconstructed library was *Hunter on the Venereal Disease*. But that left plenty of time to wander the grounds, which struck me as more rarefied than any of the bric-a-brac displayed in the house. Jefferson devoted years of his life to designing a *ferme ornée*, an ornamental (but fully functioning) farm, with romantic grottoes, garden temples and pastoral groves. I took refuge in the tiny Georgian pavilion overlooking Jefferson's terraced fruit and vegetable gardens, which float high above the rolling Piedmont countryside. Jefferson blended the colors and textures of his flowers, trees and plants like a painter: adjacent rows of purple, white and green sprouting broccoli, for example, or white and crimson eggplant. Even in late November, there are several distinct hues of red cabbage: the burgundy jersey wakefield bleeds into the bright scarlet drumhead; and both are offset by the chocolate-cherry glow of the red clay soil. "Jefferson took notes on these gardens every day for fifty years, and we maintain them exactly as he intended," said an aristocratic older woman in overalls who was tilling intently. "Well, there's one difference, of course. We're all white."

HAVING EXPERIENCED THE GARdens at Monticello, I have a hard time accepting Wills's thesis that Jefferson's aesthetic principles were divorced from his political principles. For in the peach orchards and Hyacinth blossoms of the ornamental farm, Jefferson's artistic sensuousness and his didactic messianism self-consciously converge. This is no Proustian grove, aspiring to useless elegance or purposeless beauty. It is a microcosm of Jefferson's continental ambitions, a declaration of economic independence from the Old World. The only book Jefferson published in his lifetime, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, was a refutation of Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon's thesis that the plant and animal life in North America, dwarfed by excessive humidity, were mutant, inferior copies of their European counterparts. As part of his research, Jefferson imported 300 trees, 250 vegetables and 170 fruits to Monticello, determined to prove that all natural phenomenon of the Old World could be triumphantly "fabricated at our feet." Only a dandy, Wills suggests, would ignore the constitutional ban on accepting gifts from monarchs to keep an admired engraving of Louis XVI. But in fact, Jefferson more often broke the law and twisted the Constitution in the service of his agrarian, and often fanatical, idealism. He smuggled grains of upland rice from France to South Carolina, a capital offense; and then listed this with the Declaration of Independence as his most useful service to his country. And although he thought the federal government lacked the constitutional power to buy Louisiana from France, he knowingly betrayed his strict constructionist principles, determined to secure arable land and free trade for the next generation of yeoman farmers. Gazing out at the Blue Ridge Mountains from the West portico of Monticello—and Jefferson deliberately pointed his garden porch westward—I felt uplifted by the continental vision that united the Federalists and Republicans of the founding generation: "Mexico to our left, Canada to our right and the Old World behind us!" When Ross Perot went on "Nightline" last week to compare NAFTA to the Louisiana Purchase, the analogy could not have been more precise.



WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON DEserves lots of credit for fulfilling his namesake's continental vision; but he seems as uninterested as Jefferson in picking judges who share a constitutional vision. (The story of Jefferson's battles with his judicial appointees, whom he called "a subtle corps of sappers and miners," appears in Leonard Levy's *Jefferson and Civil Liberties: The Darker Side*, on sale at the Monticello bookstore.) After the rapture of Ruth Bader Ginsburg's nomination last summer, I'm inclined to cut Clinton slack on this subject. But the slow trickle of lower court appointments suggests that the president has not entirely weaned himself of the politics of symbolism. Last week, for example, he quietly nominated Judith Rogers of the D.C. Municipal Court of Appeals to fill Clarence Thomas's seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals. In announcing the appointment, the White House emphasized that Rogers would be the second African American woman to serve on a federal circuit court, and praised her longtime advocacy of D.C. home rule and fairness to children. There is something blinkered about Clinton's notion that service in the District's local court system is appropriate preparation for the second most important court in the country. Say what you will about Ronald Reagan's and George Bush's uneven judicial appointments; at least the Republicans had the foresight to use the federal circuit courts as intellectual, rather than ornamental, farm teams for the Supreme Court. And they cared enough about ideas to elevate some of the nation's most iconoclastic conservative academics: Antonin Scalia and Robert Bork to the D.C. Circuit; Richard Posner and Frank Easterbrook to the Seventh Circuit; and so forth. If the former law professor from Arkansas is interested in his legal legacy, he should comb the law schools and tap the most promising liberal scholars as soon as possible. But of egghead nominations one hears nothing at all, except for Guido Calabresi of Yale, slated for the Second Circuit. This is a well-deserved appointment; but it is not enough. The judicial department is the one branch of government where a little aestheticized elitism still goes a long way.

JEFFREY ROSEN

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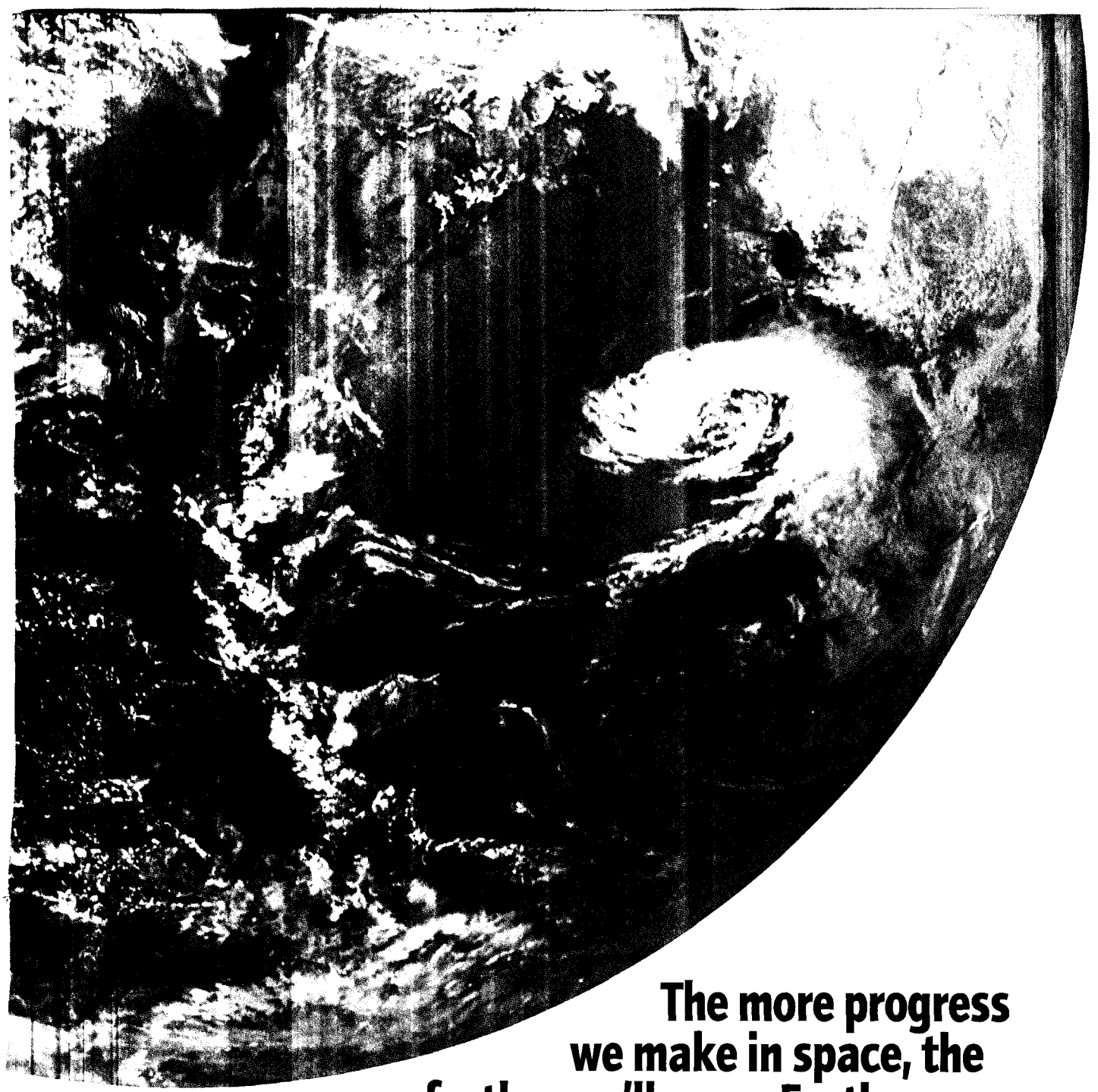

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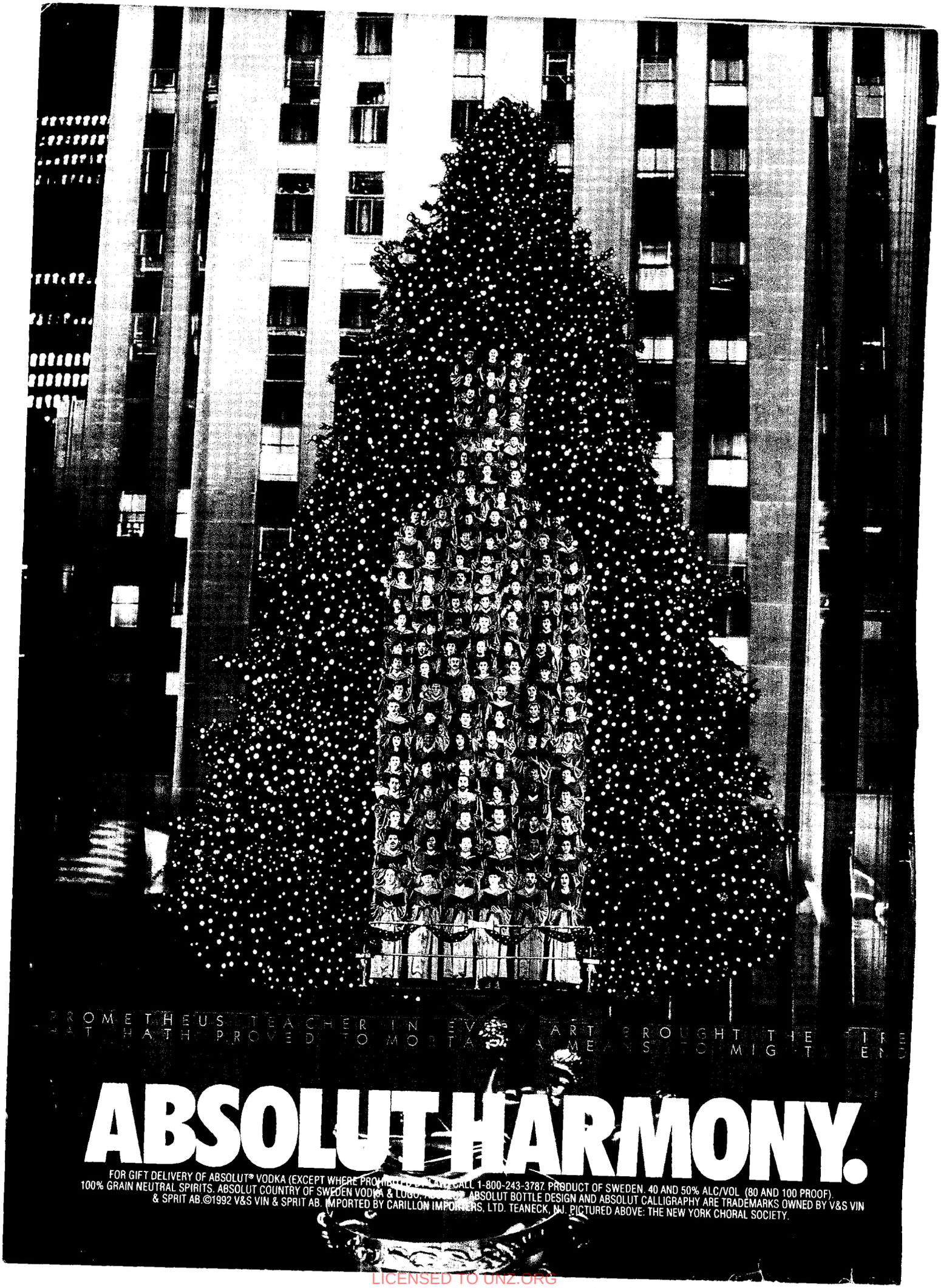
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